University of Alberta

Reflections on Death and the Afterlife in a Community of Latter-day Saints

by

Caitlin Cecelia Schmidtz ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Department of Anthropology

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall 2001

National Library of Canada

Acquisitions and Bibliographic Services

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

Acquisitions et services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-69440-2

Canada

University of Alberta

Library Release Form

Name of Author: Caitlin Cecelia Schmidtz

Title of thesis: Reflections on Death and the Afterlife in a Community of Latter-day Saints

Degree: Master of Arts

Year this Degree Granted: 2001

Permission is hereby granted to the University of Alberta Library to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly, or scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves all other publication and other rights in association with the copyright in the thesis, and except as hereinbefore provided, neither the thesis nor any substantial portion may be printed or otherwise reproduced in any material form whatever without the author's prior written permission.

6 River Glen
Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta
T8L 3X8 Canada

April 30, 2001

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Reflections on Death and the Afterlife in a Community of Latter-day Saints submitted by Caitlin Cecelia Schmidtz in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Dr. Gregory Forth

Dr. C. Roderick Wilson

Stephen A. Kent

Dr. Stephen Kent

Date: 27 April 2001

5

Abstract

This thesis explores how practitioners of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints interpret their doctrine on death and the afterlife. As both the afterlife and the achievement of eternal life are the central foci of Latter-day Saint doctrine, these doctrines play a significant role in shaping the practitioners' interpretations and understandings of daily life. Indeed, an understanding of the distinctive way of life led by the Latter-day Saints cannot be separated from an understanding of their beliefs on death and the afterlife. As the basis of this study is the doctrinal interpretation by practitioners, an investigation of the personal experiences of a community of Latter-day Saints was undertaken to elucidate Latter-day Saint understandings of death, the afterlife, and how their beliefs shape their lives. Furthermore, I argue that these beliefs and their subsequent way of life have contributed to the shaping of a people who possess a unique identity and culture of their very own.

Acknowledgements

Over the last two years, many individuals have supported me both academically and emotionally. I am deeply indebted to the participants in my study, the many individuals and families who welcomed me into their community with little apprehension and an ample amount of generosity. Special thanks are owed to the bishop, who patiently listened to my ideas and helped me with my living arrangements, and of course, the family who welcomed me into their home and their lives. In particular, I would also like to thank those members of my host family who have been especially helpful in providing me with insight and instruction on certain theological matters.

My involvement with this wonderful community would not have been possible without the introduction and assistance of Lois Johnston, a doctoral student in the Department of Anthropology under the supervision of Dr. Gregory Forth. Lois resides in a Latter-day Saint community herself, and upon learning of my thesis and search for a fieldwork location, assisted me in establishing contact with a former bishop of a local community, who in turn introduced me to the presiding bishop.

Back at the university, I am indebted to my supervisor Dr. Gregory Forth for his support and guidance over the years that I have worked with him. I feel particularly appreciative of how he has always taken the time to answer my questions and provide feedback promptly, no matter how busy he has been.

I also extend my gratitude to the other members of my committee, Dr. C. R. Wilson and Dr. Stephen Kent, for their helpful guidance and advice. I would also like to thank the Department of Anthropology for its financial support of my studies these last two years.

My thanks are also owed to Yvonne Raiwet and Adrian Robinson for their technical support and their attention to detail.

I am, of course, also deeply indebted to my husband Steven Tennant, and to my family, who have provided endless support and shown genuine interest in my work every step of the way. Thanks are also owed to my husband for his patience and love during this past year of writing, it has been an unforgettable way to begin our marriage!

Table Of Contents

Chapter One: Understanding Religion as a Part of Culture........................... 1
1.1 Introduction.. 1
1.2 Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Religious Communities and Death.......... 5
1.3 Methodology.. 15

Chapter Two: A Historical Perspective... 22
2.1 A Historical Perspective... 22
2.2 Joseph Smith and the Early Years of the Church..................................... 28
2.3 Persecution and the Movement West... 34
2.4 Restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ and the Priesthood...................... 38
2.5 Concluding Remarks.. 41

Chapter Three: The Temple: The Centre of the Latter-day Saint Faith........ 42
3.1 Introduction... 42
3.2 A Relationship Between Ancient Temple and LDS Temple Use.......................... 46
3.3 The Temple Recommend... 48
3.4 Anointing and Washing Ordinances... 52
3.5 Baptisms for the Dead.. 55
3.6 Sealing Rites.. 56
3.7 The Endowment Ceremony... 58
3.8 Concluding Remarks...63

Chapter Four: Life Before Birth... 64
4.1 Introduction... 64
4.2 Eternal Progression.. 69
4.3 The Grand Council.. 74
4.4 Concluding Remarks.. 77

Chapter Five: Mortality as a Test of Faith...................................... 79
5.1 A Way of Life...79
5.2 Translation.. 86
5.3 The Family: Eternal Implications... 88
5.4 Funerals... 92
5.5 Constructions of Meaning in Death.. 95
5.6 Concluding Remarks.. 99

Chapter Six: From One Life to Another.. 103
6.1 The Transition... 103
6.2 The Veil... 104
6.3 Paradise and the Spirit Prison... 108
6.4 The Millennium... 110
6.5 A Multi-Tiered Heaven.. 112
6.6 Concluding Remarks... 118

Chapter Seven: Conclusion.. 120

List of References.. 137

Appendix: Glossary... 145

Chapter 1
Understanding Religion as a Part of Culture

1.1 Introduction

Religion is an integral component of any cultural analysis. Religious belief, essentially the belief that not everything is ordained by man and an acknowledgement of a supernatural being, is apparently universal. Many in the contemporary world, however, view the practice of religious affiliation, or organised religion, as an 'archaic' practice based on a belief system that is unnecessary due to the advent of science. This view can hardly be said to have deeply penetrated culture, even in the Western world where the number of those with religious affiliations remains high. Despite criticisms by skeptics, religious belief has not dissipated. When people adhere to faith so strongly, there must be reasons for their adherence.

I understand the role of religion in contemporary society to be integral to the way most of us live our lives, especially with regard to identity, ideology formation, social status, way of life, and community. Furthermore, religion appears to be an integral part of the way most people rationalise the existence of death and how one faces such an event. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereafter referred to as the LDS church)[1] is quite different from traditional Christianity in its approach to these elements; therefore, a study of death and how people face death in the LDS church has the potential to contribute greatly to the understanding of their religion and culture.

Researchers interpret religious belief as an internalised structure of meanings that govern our behaviours and our view of other people. Evidently there is a profound human need to construct some sort of belief system to satisfy our psychological need for depth, meaning, and structure in our lives. This need pervades human existence both in the past and the present, and will continue to do so in the future. The reason for this need, I think, lies in this ability of religion to supply meaning and depth to our existence.

---

[1] More commonly known as the Mormon church, but the church prefers to avoid the official use of this term.

A belief system generally stipulates the status or role of the individual in his or her society. It exists in strictly defined cases such as the Hindu caste system in India, and in those as egalitarian as the hunter-gatherer groups such as the !Kung. While promoting 'Christian' concepts of charity and good works, the LDS church also permits flexibility in one's social status with the objective that everyone has an equal opportunity to prove him or herself before God.

Of all the roles that religion plays in the contemporary world, many of us perceive its most significant function to be its fundamental contributions to a cultural conception of ideology. Religion, like culture, consists of particular patterns of behaviour that are passed down through the generations, rarely homogenous, yet systematic and regular. The religion supplies the people with a cosmology as well as an explanation for the world's creation, and a detailed account of people's role in relationship to their environment. The ideology gives a sense of purpose to the people's livelihood and brings them together as a community, which not only reinforces the existence of the religious system but also perpetuates the sense of group solidarity and the unity of a support system. The ideology explains the existence of suffering and evil, offers comfort, and may even provide ways of combating evil.

The LDS have developed an ideology that, while distinct from traditional Christianity, provides its followers with a definite sense of purpose in both life and death as well as with patterns of behaviour to unify the people together as a cohesive community. Some ideological factors that distinguish the LDS church from traditional Christianity include its members' beliefs in a pre-mortal existence, modern day revelations and prophecies, baptisms performed for the dead, a multi-tiered heaven, eternal families, and the possibility of eventual deification.

Religion offers more than this sense of comfort and a role within the cosmos. Religions also serve to order our way of life. In preparation for the post-mortal existence, the LDS have a very particular way of life that they are encouraged, and indeed, expected to follow. They have scriptural commandments to fulfil (such as the ten commandments of the Old Testament and the 'Word of Wisdom' outlined in the Book of Mormon) as well as current revelations and guidelines that are revealed by the prophet of the church. By following these instructions, their religious beliefs have created and maintained order for the world in which the LDS live.

Additionally, these guidelines and commandments also serve to establish prohibitions and boundaries that promote cohesion for those who follow the belief system as distinct against the 'other.' This identification of the 'other' reinforces their own sense of culture, enabling the LDS to maintain their own traditions and sense of heritage as distinct from those who do not. The existence of these distinct practices serves to prove that belonging to the group is meaningful and creates a sense of security that might be hard to fulfil otherwise. In a world where individuality has generally been discouraged because of its disadvantages to the survival of the group, culture has provided a system of beliefs known as religion.

This thesis will explore how LDS understandings of their doctrine of death and the afterlife impact their way of life here in mortality, and in turn, how this has contributed to their identity as a people. While the LDS eschatology is quite detailed and complex, I was initially intrigued at the prospect of examining how LDS members actually interpret this eschatology within their daily lives. This focus on interpretation made it critical to conduct field research and question the people themselves. During this intimate exposure to the LDS way of life, I came to realise just how seriously the LDS recognise themselves as a people and how this self-identification is recognised by their neighbours. Even though these outsiders may recognise the LDS' identification as a people, there appears to be a limited understanding of the factors that have shaped this identification.

This emphasis on examining how LDS practitioners interpret the doctrine rather than merely examining the doctrine itself, does not entail judging whether or not the participants in the study were right or wrong, or whether or not they 'misunderstood' any aspects of the doctrine. Instead, this emphasis helps demonstrate how the doctrine and scriptures[2] have inspired certain cultural beliefs. That is, many vague or ill-defined concepts in the scriptures and doctrine have been further interpreted or transformed into something much more elaborate and meaningful.

One example surrounds the belief in the 'veil,' a veil that separates this life from both the pre-mortal and the post-mortal existence. This veil is alluded to in the scriptures, but is relatively insignificant in the official doctrine. Upon my arrival in the field, I had a limited understanding of this veil, but as my research proceeded I became aware that the veil was a very real and profound component of these peoples' understandings of life, death, and the afterlife.

It is equally important to make it clear that this thesis will not attempt to establish the authenticity of any of these LDS beliefs, scriptures and doctrines, or whether or not Joseph Smith, the founder of the church, was truly called as a prophet of God. What this thesis will attempt to demonstrate is that LDS beliefs in death and the afterlife are an integral component of their way of life and have helped shape LDS notions of identity.

---

[2] LDS scriptures include the King James Version of the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price.

1.2 Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Religious Communities and Death

The LDS church is understood both by members and outsiders to be unique, neither Catholic nor Protestant, as the LDS consider themselves to have re-established God's covenant here on earth, as it was before it became corrupted by later influences. This return to the pure covenant was brought about by the prophet Joseph Smith, who began receiving revelations from God in the early nineteenth century. LDS theology is primarily based on the doctrine given to Smith in these revelations and is substantiated by further revelations and certain biblical passages. At the core of the faith is the belief that salvation may be obtained for all of humanity and that the church's primary function is to aid its members in achieving eternal life. This theological concept of salvation plays a significant role in shaping how the LDS practitioners repent and live righteously in preparation for the afterlife.

Before one can begin to understand the mortuary ritual and beliefs of any one culture, one must first acknowledge that while death is universal, reactions to death vary cross-culturally. Cross-cultural data and ethnographies collected from a number of scholars, such as Arnold van Gennep, Robert Hertz, Peter Metcalf, Richard Huntington, and Victor W. Turner, may be used to re-analyse this fundamental process of life and how various religious groups shape or are shaped by death. The LDS church, unlike many other religious groups, does not place much emphasis on dying and mortuary ritual. It is evident, however, from an investigation of church doctrine that the LDS have an intricate eschatology regarding their beliefs of death and the afterlife.

An examination of universal features in mortuary ritual and beliefs displays a need for cross-cultural studies. Since the features that do occur universally vary so widely, it would not be a fair conclusion to assume that a characteristic occurs everywhere within the same context and with the same meaning. For a death custom to have meaning, it should be "placed in the context of a particular ideological, social and economic system..." (Peter Metcalf and Richard Huntington 1991: 75). While the LDS mortuary rites may themselves be simple, the mortuary ritual should not be separated from these contexts of meaning, for it is the ideology concerning the afterlife that shapes their views towards life and death. One aspect cannot be studied in isolation.

Understanding the appropriate norms and routines of mortuary ritual means that one must first understand the ideology of the culture in regard to life. To understand a culture's customs and norms surrounding death, one must first understand how the culture approaches life as "the issue of death throws into relief the most important cultural values by which people live their lives and evaluate their experiences" (Metcalf and Huntington 1991: 25). With reference to the LDS belief system, this idea has fundamental importance because the LDS believe that the ultimate life is one lived in preparation for the afterlife. As such, every mortal act will have an effect on a person in the afterlife.

Nineteenth century evolutionists, such as James G. Frazer and Edward B. Tylor, were particularly interested in the origins of culture and religion. Religion was largely seen as a prelude to science, developed in order to resolve people's anxieties of death. Since people had not yet developed a scientific understanding of death, it was believed that people developed religion as an alternative form of understanding.

The functionalists continued to propagate the idea that religion arose out of the need to resolve the anxieties and fears that people have regarding life and ultimately, death. Religion, according to this view, would not exist if it did not serve some sort of function. While the functionalist approach is not without its difficulties and shortcomings, it does have some merit in application to LDS doctrine.

As discussed by Michael Leming and George Dickinson (1998: 144-148), the theoretical positions of Bronislaw Malinowski, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, and George Homans provide further comprehension of how religion may function as a means to aid people's understanding of death. On the one hand, Malinowski asserted that of all the events in life, the act of death instils the most fear and apprehension, and that this fear may be resolved through religious belief and ritual. On the other hand, Radcliffe-Brown, a structural functionalist, asserted that it is religion itself that instils the fear and anxiety as a way of maintaining the social order within a community.

Homans's work is an attempt to resolve the differences between Malinowski (who possessed an ultimately individualistic approach) and Radcliffe-Brown (who possessed a sociological approach) with the assertion that they are both fundamentally correct. As with many other sociologists, such as Emile Durkheim and Robert Hertz, Homans believes that one's reaction to death is conditioned or ascribed by the culture in which one lives. Malinowki and Radcliffe-Brown's views may be reconciled according to the following four postulations (Leming and Dickinson 1998: 146). First, religious ideology provides a system that relieves the anxiety that arises when another person dies. Second, religious rituals may be performed to eliminate this death anxiety. Third, society issues a threat of anxiety (such as the warning that any failure to comply may bring forth the eternal wrath of God) as a way of ensuring compliance with these religious rites and, in doing so, a group of people unites together against this perceived threat. Finally, the performance of these group rites may restore the social order and remove any contamination that a death may have introduced into the group.

Subsequent tests by sociologists have produced some evidence that affirms Homans' reconciliation of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown. Leming's study (1979- 1980) on residents of Northfield, Minnesota demonstrated that "religion, when accompanied with a high degree of commitment, not only relieves the dread that it engenders, but also dispels much of the anxiety caused by the social effects of death" (1998: 147). As such, those with a high degree of religious commitment suffer from low death anxiety, and those with only a moderate degree of commitment suffer from the highest amount of death anxiety, inheriting the anxieties of religion without the consolation that it provides to the devout.

My own field research supports this conclusion in so far as those who were highly committed to the LDS faith did indeed appear to have low levels of death anxiety. Even in the context of three funerals for members of the community in just over a week, the people whom I interviewed seemed quite open about discussing the subject of death and their emotions. Furthermore, those people who had at some point in their lives been less committed to the faith or had not yet converted to the faith, stated that they had had much greater anxieties and fears about death at that time than they did now in their contemporary lives.

The LDS religion makes it clear that while death is universal and inevitable, what comes afterwards is not, since everything that one does now will have an indisputable effect on what happens to the person after his or her death. The emphasis of LDS mortuary rites is not on the completion of death and ensuring the soul's journey, as it is believed that the mortuary rites have no effect on the salvation of the deceased. This effect is brought about by the deceased himself during mortality.[3] Upon death, the mortuary rites are conducted for the living. People gather together to share their grief over their temporary separation and anticipate their reunion in the afterlife.

---

[3] As baptisms for the dead are conducted for non-members, I do not include them with these mortuary rites.

Many cultures believe that the actions of the survivors have an effect on the deceased's place in the afterlife. The Chinese in Singapore, for example, are renowned for their elaborate mortuary rituals, which ensure the place of the deceased within the realm of the ancestors (Tong Chee Kiong 1993: 130-131). Death is merely a transitionary state, and they believe that communication exists between the two realms. By performing these intricate rites, the Chinese believe that the deceased reciprocate their effort as part of a continual exchange.

While it would be limiting to view the LDS church only from a functionalist perspective, these basic functionalist points do provide some value for analysis. It is seen that by following doctrine, LDS practitioners gain an element of control over their destiny. Their beliefs about the afterlife also help to reduce the death anxiety of the practitioners. For example, the LDS find great comfort in knowing that death need only be a temporary separation from their loved ones. However, the individual responsibility for one's station in a multi-tiered heaven does in some cases increase the anxiety of the LDS. There were several people in my study who confessed to anxiety over their beliefs that they are accountable for every single thing that they do in life.

Emile Durkheim disagreed with the idea that religion originated out of the fears and anxieties of the individual. He formulated a highly influential definition of religion (classified as having a belief system, a body of ritualistic acts, worship of the supernatural, and a collective representation) and a dichotomy between the sacred and the profane (1915: 37). What he defines as religion is identified as sacred, and what is not sacred is identified as profane. This definition of religion may indeed be used to describe the basic components of the LDS church, but the distinction between sacred and profane is not always clear. Rather than making such a blatant distinction between these two domains, the LDS can be seen as combining the two in their everyday lives. That is, by following certain purifying standards like the wearing of endowment clothing (the 'temple garments') underneath his or her regular outer clothing, each person may carry elements of the sacred into what Durkheim would refer to as the profane domain. Thus, the daily use of these garments allows the wearer to experience the sacred while participating in the profane world.

Durkheim's perception of a strict dichotomy between the sacred and the profane does have some relevance, though, in regard to the LDS. The LDS interpret their temple as being sacred and highly distinct from the outer profane world (see Section 3.2). Fulfilling Durkheim's definition, the temple is central to their belief system--essential for the performance of ordinances central to the faith, inspirational as the participants are bestowed with the opportunity to become closer to God, and reinforcing of the covenants they pledge that draw them together as a unique people.

Furthermore, beliefs in the sacred help unify the LDS as a people separate from all others. The aspects of the faith that the LDS classify as being truly sacred are withheld from outsiders. That the most profound details of the sacred are kept hidden from outsiders is not because the LDS are being secretive, but in their eyes it is because they are respecting the sacred inherent in their ordinances. To the LDS then, sanctity is closely tied with notions of purity and commitment to God. Thus, if this sanctity is in any way exposed to the profane (or whatever is considered to be impure), then the sanctity is defiled.

Even though it might appear somewhat contradictory, the LDS can wear their sacred garments in their everyday lives as a protection from the profane as long as they continue to keep themselves pure and untainted by profane elements. When the LDS return to the temple wearing these garments, the anointing and washing ordinances performed on their arrival would in turn remove any lingering traces of the outside world that might remain.

Just as the social cohesiveness of the group is important to the LDS, it is also important to Durkheim's interpretation of religion. Durkheim believed that religious rites not only serve to reinforce the bond between the individual and the deity, but also the bond between the individual and the social group of which he or she is a member. The LDS are encouraged to become community oriented, and to involve themselves as much as possible with their church in a variety of activities--Sunday services, study groups, missionary activities, charitable acts, various business organisations, and so forth.

While both the rituals and the doctrine encourage the strengthening of the bonds of the LDS community, Durkheim does not account for the simple fact that society is never truly homogenous. Even though the LDS church is remarkably cohesive, there are sure to be variations as to the interpretations and expressions of belief (particularly with the church's global expansion). Additionally, not all LDS members live the doctrine to the degree that is taught. As such, many LDS are not eligible to enter the temple and partake in the most sacred ordinances of the faith. Those that do could conceivably have varying interpretations as to what they are attempting to do, although I did not see any evidence of these variances in my field research. I believe that the church is only truly homogenous when referring to the members that closely adhere to the faith; thus, those who are not actively involved in the church are not fully enculturated into the group.

According to Gerd Baumann (1992: 98), a failure that many make in their study of ritual is making the assumption that the ritual community acts as one collective voice and that they have a shared interpretation of the world. The LDS faith is one that has splintered many times. After the death of their prophet Joseph Smith, the church split into two, and the Reorganised Church of Jesus

Christ of Latter-day Saints was formed. Subsequent conflicts over the interpretation of doctrine have continued over the years. There are many groups officially condemned by the church for their differing interpretations of doctrine. For example, the splinter groups (to whom the term LDS is often incorrectly applied) that continue to practice polygamy even though it was condemned by the church in 1890. This lack of homogeneity is contrary to Durkheim's belief that "religious representations are collective representations which express collective realities..." (1915: 10). As much as I believe the LDS church to be a highly cohesive body, the fact that it is not completely homogenous is shown by these divisions into splinter groups, the existence of non-practising members, and the tremendous rate of church expansion across the world.

Robert Hertz, a student of Durkheim, made an impressive, if brief, foray into the cross-cultural study of death and mortuary ritual. Like Durkheim, Hertz had an interest in collective representations. Hertz focused this interest in the direction of how death threatens the collective representation of the social group, and explored the social nature of emotional responses to death which had traditionally been viewed as private and individualistic. Furthermore, Hertz demonstrated that these emotions, as well as the conception of death, are not only social but also "can be studied as sociological facts" (Maurice Bloch and Jonathan Parry 1982: 3).

Hertz concluded that the final mortuary rites of any culture have three objectives: "to give burial to the remains of the deceased, to ensure the soul peace and access to the land of the dead, and finally to free the living from the obligations of mourning" (1960: 54). He pays special attention to the practice of secondary burial which brings the deceased from a state of isolation to a collective one when his body and soul is reunited with those of his ancestors. Hertz advances a model that secondary burial marks the beginning of a new and exalted body (1960: 55), while the LDS believe that the spirit remains separate (and thus, isolated from the physical body) until the time of the resurrection when it is reunited with an exalted physical form.

Hertz' analysis of mortuary rites, particularly this emphasis on secondary burial, demonstrated that mortuary rites are often a process of rites that progress from one stage to another. Arnold van Gennep's highly influential work The Rites of Passage referred to these stages as those of separation, liminality, and reintegration. It is important to note that while all three stages will occur within every rite of passage, they will not necessarily all occur to the same degree or receive the same emphasis cross-culturally (Arnold van Gennep 1960: 11). For his part, Turner has developed the idea of liminality as both a transitory and marginal state (1969: 94). Metcalf and Huntington have explained that the concept behind these rites of passage may be seen in relation to three major issues in modern cultural anthropology: "the integration of the individual into society, the nature of symbolic meaning, and the moral and intellectual relativity of cultures" (1991: 31).

Van Gennep states that as "an individual is placed in various sections of society, synchronically and in succession, in order to pass from one category to another and to join individuals in other sections, he must submit, from the day of his birth to that of his death, to ceremonies whose forms often vary but whose function is similar" (1960: 188). LDS members are required to submit throughout life to certain rites and ceremonies, as well as to the Word of Wisdom, in order to obtain a glorious place in the afterlife. Rites of passage for most of the LDS include baptism, ordination to the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods (for the men only), marriage, the serving of missions, sealing rites, and of course, ultimately, funerary rites.

A broader interpretation of these rites of passage may be seen in LDS eschatology with the differing phases of existence: the pre-mortal (the act of separation), mortal (the liminal phase), and the post-mortal (the act of reintegration). The act of separation may be interpreted as the separation from God that occurs through the process of birth. At the moment of birth, our memories of the pre-mortal existence are vanquished, and we become, as Turner refers to the person in the liminal phase, a 'tabula rasa', or 'blank slate'. We are assigned a new status "on which is inscribed the knowledge and wisdom of the group..." (Turner 1969: 103). A certain degree of autonomy is granted to the individual as one is removed from the direct presence of God and is given the right of 'agency,' that is, the ability to make one's own choices, and whether or not one wishes to enter into God's covenants. The LDS justify the existence of life's hardships as God's way of ensuring that we experience enough adversity and suffering so that we may truly appreciate the glories of the kingdom of heaven. Reintegration into the kingdom of heaven begins after death, when we regain a more direct relationship with God. Given the importance that the LDS place on preparation for the afterlife, their focus is on the reintegration into God's kingdom of heaven.

An important part of heightening one's status as an adult within the LDS community is by serving a mission. During this missionary period, the person does without property, status, privileges, and various material pleasures (Turner 1967: 143). Missionaries must also dress according to a certain standard and contact with their family is severely limited. Over a period of two years[4] of physical and emotional separation from their home community, they become a special and distinct group within the larger LDS community, and upon their return their position in the community is highly elevated. This physical separation from the community and minimal contact with family and friends encourages an intimate relationship with God and service to the church. Turner explains that one would not gain a high status without the existence of a lower status, and that in order to gain this elevated status, one must first experience that of the low (1967: 97).

---

[4] In the rare event that a young woman serves a mission, the mission lasts only eighteen months.

Moving from one sphere of existence to another warrants not merely a change in social status, but the symbolic portrayal of spatial passage. The entrance into a new world may be illuminated through crossing a threshold, as in entering a temple. The crossing of thresholds is symbolic as "the door is the boundary between the foreign and domestic worlds in the case of an ordinary dwelling, between the profane and sacred worlds in the case of a temple" (van Gennep 1960: 20).

"Death provides occasions and materials for a symbolic discourse on life--through the different treatments accorded to those whose lives have ended in different ways and at different stages of development, through theories about what happens in the after-life, through the symbols used in funerary rites or eschatology to express the contrast between life and death." (S. C. Humphreys, 1981: 9-10). Various scholars, including Peter Metcalf and Richard Huntington, have shown how religious interpretations of death and the afterlife are intertwined with a culture's ideology regarding life. These approaches to the study of religious communities provide a valuable framework in which to analyse how LDS doctrine shapes LDS interpretations and understandings of daily life, and in turn, the shaping of their identity as a people.

1.3 Methodology

Since one of the main objectives of this study was to investigate how LDS practitioners interpret and apply doctrine to their daily lives in anticipation of the afterlife, interviewing practitioners was vital to my research. Given the doctrinal basis of the study, the preferred participants were those actively involved in church rites and services. As such, the participants largely included average male members of the Melchizedek priesthood, and their wives.[5] As there was no interviewing of children, participants were limited to adults across a broad range of age groups, from young adults to seniors.

These participants were chosen from a small, predominantly LDS community near Cardston, Alberta,[6] one of the oldest LDS settlements in Canada. Cardston is the location of the first LDS temple in Canada; in fact, it is one of the oldest in the world. The temple is at the core of LDS ritual and practitioners come from long distances in order to participate in these rites. Thus, I believed that it would be beneficial to be at such a centre of religious worship, studying the people who are fortunate to have convenient access to the place they need to fulfil their most sacred ordinances, including the baptisms of the dead and the marriage ceremonies that 'seal' a couple for eternity.

Southern Alberta served for more than one hundred years as the stronghold of the LDS church in Canada. Gradually, more people are emigrating from southern Alberta across Canada or into the United States for employment and educational opportunities. This dispersion has become more feasible as additional temples are being built, and there is no longer such a need to be close to the Cardston temple. There are more than sixty thousand members of the church within Alberta itself (Lynn A. Rosenvall 2000: 1), with a large component of this population still residing in southern Alberta. The LDS first settled in western Canada in 1887 (see Section 2.3)[7] in what was then the North West Territories, and is now part of south-western Alberta. The community in which I made my study was established close to the turn of the century.

---

[5] The Melchizedek priesthood refers to the senior level of priesthood within the LDS church structure (see Section 2.4).

[6] I have chosen to refer to this community as 'Legacy,' in order to help protect the anonymity of the participants in my study.

Church members in this community come from a range of different backgrounds. There are those who converted and moved to Legacy in order to be part of a predominantly LDS community; and there are lifelong members of the church who have either resided in this area for all or most of their lives, or those who moved there to be near the temple. There are a number of people, about half a dozen, who are from the United States and married local residents, usually after meeting their spouse in Utah.

Despite the fact most LDS do not live near a temple and cannot attend the temple regularly, dedication to church life among active members appears to be mostly homogenous throughout the world. The church does not tolerate any dissent and adheres to a fairly strict program of implementation. This of course does not mean that LDS practitioners assimilate American culture at the loss of their own indigenous cultural practices. An art exhibit at the Church Museum of History and Art exemplifies this point as it shows how traditional indigenous practices are maintained and used fairly consistently to portray LDS beliefs. It is interesting, however, that the LDS belief system is most readily accommodated to indigenous belief systems where it is conveniently compatible with pre-existing ideologies.

For these reasons, I believe that Cardston provides a fairly consistent framework of LDS beliefs in the area of death and the afterlife, particularly when viewed from within Canadian/American culture. This homogeneity of LDS identity is, however, only applicable with respect to members of the church who are actively involved in the church and have been incorporated into the culture.

---

[7] It is important to make a distinction between the LDS settlers who arrived with Charles Ora Card in 1887 and the LDS of eastern Canada who converted in the early years of the church when it was first becoming established in New York state.

I considered it imperative to be officially sanctioned by the local church so that the community would not feel threatened by my presence and so that they would feel encouraged to share their thoughts and beliefs with me. Advice on how to proceed with this was provided by an anthropologist, Steven L. Olsen, of the LDS Museum of Church History and Art in Salt Lake City, Utah, with whom I had already conducted research as a research associate with the Provincial Museum of Alberta. Under his guidance, I established contact with the ward's Bishop to make my intentions known, and visited the community for the first time to be interviewed in February 2000. Shortly before my arrival the following August, living arrangements were made for me to board with a local family. Once settled in the community, contact was established with the community by attending a Sunday service and being formerly introduced to the community.

I interviewed the participants over the course of a three week period in August 2000, and then conducted a follow-up visit of four days in February 2001. Given the highly personal nature of the subject under investigation, these interviews were usually conducted either one-on-one or between a married couple and myself. The interviews were held at the participants' convenience, and were primarily scheduled during the day.

During the course of the initial period of fieldwork in August 2000, with only one exception, each participant required only one interview, from an average of forty-five minutes to two hours. The subsequent research period followed up on a few participants regarding specific questions that I developed after the initial period of fieldwork was completed.

There were a total of forty participants in this study; twenty-six of these were married couples interviewed together, while fourteen were interviewed independently. Of the forty, three were converts, while thirty-seven were lifelong members. Also, five of the forty were married to non-members (all women), and five had at some point in their lives been inactive.[8] These forty participants also demonstrated a rather high intermarriage rate between American and Albertan LDS. Of the forty, there were four men married to American women, two Albertan women married to American men (and returning home to visit their families), and two Albertan women who had married American men but divorced, and subsequently, returned to Legacy. All of those interviewed were currently active in the faith and had been so for quite some time.

I asked questions regarding the participant's interpretations of specific doctrinal issues and how the doctrine shapes their life. While these interviews were loosely structured around the specific doctrinal issues that I investigated, I believed that it was important to let the interviews remain relatively non-directive to let the participant mention at length whatever he or she thought was significant, giving me a broader span of information that proved to be useful for my research.

The questions that I asked in these interviews varied considerably. For example, if an informant had not yet received his or her endowment at the temple, then it was hardly relevant for me to ask the person about his or her temple experiences. Those couples who were married in the temple would be asked different questions from those who had not. People who had converted were asked some different questions from the lifetime members. Men were also asked some different questions from women, namely about their service in the priesthood and their service as missionaries.

---

[8] Inactive members of the church are those who have become distant from the church; thus, these members would not be eligible to enter the temple. These members might simply not be practising the doctrine of the church (for example, following the Word of Wisdom), or perhaps, they might have turned against the beliefs of the church.

Besides being fully informed as to the nature of the project and being granted the opportunity to consent to the research, the participant was granted anonymity given the personal nature of the research. I felt that the granting of anonymity (through the use of alternative 'code' names during the documentation process) was vital to avoid any dissent within the community or criticism from the church.

Data were also collected through my attendance at church rituals, particularly funerals, wedding receptions and Sunday church services. These presented me with the opportunity to observe the important ritualistic aspects of the faith--how they are performed and how they serve to enact the doctrine. My attendance of church rituals was somewhat limited, however, as I am not a member of the church myself, and am therefore not permitted to enter the temple for the ordinances that are central to the faith.

The following chapters will explore aspects of the doctrine that I believe shape the LDS interpretations of life, death, and the afterlife, and their resulting notions of identity. Chapter two will situate the LDS church in its historical context, and its early years of persecution. The persecution and distrust of the early LDS communities represented the intolerance of outsiders to the new and different belief structure of the LDS, and the LDS' condemnation of the lifestyles of the outsiders. The popularity and strength of the LDS church is growing rapidly throughout the world despite the dire predictions made by many of its early critics, but the strong insider/outsider boundaries have never been completely dismantled. This next chapter will discuss how the church developed, and how these notions of insiders and outsiders were created. This discussion of the historical context is a discussion of a history that LDS everywhere believe they share, and consider to be a part of their identity as a people.

Chapter three explores the role of the temple in LDS life. The ordinances performed at the temple represent the beliefs that LDS members consider to be essential for the salvation for all of humanity, and an exploration of these beliefs cannot be conducted without a discussion of this sacred place of worship. Chapter four outlines a number of the beliefs that readily distinguish the LDS church from other Christian denominations. With the belief in a pre-mortal existence, their ideology of a life before birth confronts many of the ideological constructs of traditional Christianity; thus, this concept of a pre-mortal existence has helped shape some of the unique theological tenets of the LDS church and their beliefs regarding death and the afterlife. Chapter five discusses how their beliefs regarding the afterlife impact how they live their lives during mortality and how their beliefs have constructed meaning in death. Chapter six ties many of the themes of the previous chapters together by focusing on LDS beliefs in the afterlife and the purpose of life.

Chapter 2
A Historical Perspective

2.1 A Historical Perspective

An understanding of the LDS church must begin with the particular environment in which Joseph Smith grew up, and which influenced his life and his beliefs. Contrary to what is generally presumed, Smith's inspiration and communication with the divine was not at all unusual for the time and region. What was unusual was his success, and the longevity and expansion of his church. Joseph Smith grew into maturity in the Palmyra[9] region of western New York State, at a time when that region was still considered to be part of the American frontier. By the late nineteenth century, the region was well populated and there was a considerable amount of religious activity; but for the most part, this religious activity was centred around individualistic spiritual practices that were significantly influenced by folk magic. By the early nineteenth century only one adult in ten belonged to any particular church (D. Michael Quinn 1998: 27) and the local religious institutions, the Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Quakers, were trying to attract converts. The early years of the LDS church were very much a part of early American culture and need to be situated within that context.

The early to mid nineteenth century was a period of religious revivalism in upstate New York. The region around Palmyra was certainly no exception, as the region became known as the 'burned-over district,' due to the metaphorical flames that were set by religious evangelism. The various Christian denominations were eager to promote themselves and attract converts. They were also concerned about the practice of folk magic among the 'lay people,' and lobbied the government to enact legislation against these practices, which included treasure-seeking.

---

[9] Smith also resided with his family for a while in the adjacent community of Manchester. The two communities, however, are so closely tied to one another that events in Manchester are usually lumped together with those in Palmyra.

People of varying backgrounds searched for hidden treasures, particularly the quest for gold and silver as well as other valuables. A small portion of these treasure-seekers combined their desire for riches with beliefs in the occult by exercising a variety of different forms of divination and magic. The origins of these riches seem somewhat clouded in mystery as there does not appear to be much of an explanation of where they thought these items came from. It is possible that they could have felt that these 'riches' may have been buried by peoples a long time ago. It is worthwhile to mention that treasure-seeking was also popular at the same time in England, where people had a long history of burying valuables only to have them rediscovered later on by others.

While the Christian denominations were rather suspicious of these practices, the lay people themselves, who were typically literate, were suspicious in turn of the established sects. They were leery of these established Christian churches as they appeared to represent the elite, and the professional and business classes. Churches were a part of the community, but people appeared not to place as much faith in them as they did their own individualistic spiritual practices, which included aspects of mysticism and the occult. In other words, the strong belief and practice of religion in early to mid nineteenth century New England should not be equated with the word 'church.' This distrust of the institution heightened the importance of developing a more personal relationship with the spiritual.

Attracting converts was also a challenge in so far as upstate New York became the site of many homegrown religious groups, from "spiritualism to liberal rationalism to socialist utopianism to Swedenborgianism, with its concepts of eternal marriage and a three-tiered heaven" (Richard N. Ostling and Joan K. Ostling 1999: 21) which differed radically from the more traditional religious institutions. Emanuel Swedenborg was well-known for preaching about his beliefs and spiritual experiences in the area while Joseph Smith was still a child. Swedenborg was particularly well-known for his visions of God, who appeared as a man, and for his ability to converse with angels (Quinn 1998: 14-15). There were also frequent claims of visions appearing to the devout, especially among adolescents.

The religious fervour focused particularly on issues of millennialism and restoration of a pure, untainted Christianity. Many of the revivalists preached that the second coming of Christ was near, and that it was a time of preparation, but speculation was rampant as to when this second coming would actually arrive. A local group, the Millerites (founded by the farmer William Miller) set the date for 1843 and developed a following in the thousands. When his prediction did not come true, many of his followers predictably strayed, but some still held strong and were condensed into what eventually became known as the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The theme of restoration was particularly relevant to the founding of the Campbellites, named after Alexander Campbell and his father Thomas, who promoted a 'Restoration Movement' that influenced thousands. The Campellites renounced all creeds but their interpretation of doctrine remained relatively the same. His followers formulated the Disciples of Christ and the Churches of Christ (Ostling and Ostling 1999: 22).

This theme of restoration is crucial to an understanding of the LDS church (see Section 2.4). The millennial fervour also had a profound influence on the development of the LDS church. Joseph Smith never actually set a date for the second coming of Christ, but it was widely believed that it would arrive in the immediate future. The early church assumed that the millennium would closely follow the restoration of the true church of Christ. Thus, there was an intense urgency to improve the world and live as righteously as possible in preparation.

The contemporary church continues to believe that the modern world is fast approaching this second coming, and that there is an urgent need to prepare. The imminent arrival of Christ is often seen in the rising chaos and decline in morality in the modern world, and Satan is seen to be working harder than he ever has before. This opinion was mentioned several times by the participants in this field study. These millennial expectations are further reflected in the LDS practice of food storage, the home storage of enough food to last the family for two years and enough supplies to sustain the family for at least one year.

The religious fervour of the nineteenth century drew upon an extensive tradition of folk magic and a magical worldview. This folk magic was not about the witchcraft or Satanism that we know now, but rather was related to a very personal and private relationship with the supernatural world that drew upon astrology and mysticism, and included the then common practice of treasure-seeking. That early church leaders were a part of this tradition was not in any way unusual for the time, and in fact, during their lifetimes, Joseph Smith and his father never denied statements attesting to their involvement with folk magic (Quinn 1998: 323), not believing that it was anything negative. Literature on the subject was also readily available. During the time that Smith lived in Palmyra, the community had two bookstores and one newspaper to provide these materials. Records of these bookstores make it clear that they distributed a number of prominent books on folk magic at prices that the common people could afford (Quinn 1998: 178-193).

There was an intimate relationship between the areas of magic and religion, so intimate as to lend full support to Claude Levi-Strauss's claim that "there is no religion without magic any more than there is magic without at least a trace of religion" (1966: 221). In essence, 'magic' and 'religion' as Joseph Smith knew them were inextricable, and the fact that Smith had a magic worldview did not make him any less religious or devout a Christian. Evidence to support this position may be drawn from a number of different sources. These sources include various archival records written by friendly and hostile contemporaries of Smith, including family members; a collection of 'sacred relics' such as talismans, seer stones and magic parchments that were passed down from Smith to his descendants; and a number of books on magic and the occult that Smith possessed.

As by its very nature, folk magic is a private activity, and its practice decreased as the church became increasingly more institutionalised and increasingly enrolled children in public education. The role of folk magic in the LDS worldview decreased to the point where the LDS now have no more of a magical worldview than does western society in general. The decline of folk magic, however, does not mean that the magical worldview prevalent in the early church has had no legacy. Traces of that early heritage remain evident in so far as the LDS continue to believe that they have an intimate relationship with the divine, that visions and communication with both the divine and deceased spirits are not unusual, and that Melchizedek priesthood holders have certain healing powers. These may be scorned by the scientific world as irrational falsehoods, but the LDS have faith in these powers and within the belief system, they are considered to be completely rational.

The prevalence of folk magic in the early LDS church, particularly the evidence that demonstrates Joseph Smith's active role in it, appears to be an embarrassment to the contemporary church, as though it is feared that the influence of folk magic somehow reduced the authenticity or divinity of Smith's revelations and church leadership. D. Michael Quinn contests this as he believes that it is possible that the practice of folk magic, particularly treasure-seeking, actually strengthened the LDS's own sense of spiritual growth and religiosity (1998: 64-65). Folk magic was not seen to conflict with the LDS's Christian beliefs, but was rather a materialist extension of those beliefs. It is evident from the historical record that Smith engaged in treasure-seeking not just for the search for treasure, but that he was also significantly influenced by clairvoyance, a gift frequently referred to at the time as 'seership.' With this gift of seership, Smith had the ability to confront any spirits that were guardians of the treasure (Quinn 1998: 65). The removal of the gold plates (that is, the plates that contained the Book of Mormon that he was divinely ordered to retrieve) is apparently the only occasion that Smith removed any 'treasure' from the ground.

After years of little interest, the study of Smith's early years, and his involvement with folk magic and treasure-seeking heightened dramatically in the 1980's with the Mark Hofmann scandal. Hofmann 'discovered' archival records that provided astonishing evidence of the church's origins, of Smith's youth, and of Smith's relationship with folk magic. These documents were later proven to be forgeries, but the interest in them stimulated an academic investigation to reassess the historical context from which the church arose. However, the shadow of the Hofmann scandal continues to linger over this investigation and it remains a controversial area of research.

As controversial as it may appear, situating Joseph Smith and the early church within the context of the local community and larger worldview is very important. Without insinuating that its early influences of folk magic reduce church authenticity, it is fundamental to reflect upon the American frontier mentality, and the religious revivalism and intense spiritual speculation from which the church arose, taking into account their "devotion to the Bible, an intensely personal relationship with God, the belief in the reality of divine and diabolic intervention in daily life, explanations that God's true church should be like apostolic Christianity, and a conviction that the glorious return of Christ to the earth was imminent" (Quinn: 326).

2.2 Joseph Smith and the Early Years of the Church

A thorough understanding of the life of Joseph Smith, Jr. (1805 - 1844) is fundamental to understanding the basic tenets of the LDS church. Smith founded the church in 1830 in New York State, on the basis of visions that he began receiving in 1820. After Smith was murdered by a mob, he was proclaimed a martyr by the LDS and he continues to have a prominent role in both the history and the doctrine of the church. Smith may not have been a divine being but he had the privilege of being close to the divine.

Queries and criticisms in regard to the authenticity of Smith's relationship with the divine appear frequently in both the literature and modern culture. It is debated whether or not Smith was indeed a modern day prophet of God, or whether or not he was merely a master scam artist, or even whether or not he was simply delusional and suffering from some sort of mental illness. Owing to the limited scope of this work, I cannot even begin to consider this issue. Regardless of whether or not Smith was actually called to be a prophet of God, millions of people around the world believe that Smith had an intimate relationship with the divine; thus, it becomes imperative to have some understanding of his life and his role in the development of the LDS church.

Because his followers hold him in such regard, the LDS have been criticised for worshipping Smith, but it was his special relationship with God that elevated Smith to a place of veneration among the LDS people. It is readily apparent from church doctrine and practices that Jesus Christ is the Saviour, but it is interesting to see the lengths to which the LDS will go to revere the prophet who restored Christ's church here on earth. For example, any non-LDS visiting Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah could not help but notice (and perhaps even feel overwhelmed by) the array of images in Smith's memory--from busts and statues to painting exhibits.

Born in 1805, Joseph Smith was the fourth of eight children of a hardworking pioneer family in Vermont. As times were hard, the family relocated several times, ending up in New York State where Smith spent most of his youth. The Smith children did not go to school but received their schooling at home, and not uncommon for that time, much of that education stemmed from the Bible. Like many others, the Smith family did not belong to any one particular denomination. While some of his family joined the Presbyterian church, the fierce competition among the Christian denominations in the community was reflected in their home and it was an issue of contention. The sectarian rivalry was an issue of deep concern to the young Joseph and he was uncertain as to which church was in fact the true church of Christ.

Seeking comfort from the verse James 1:5 which counsels people to pray to God if they are in need of wisdom for God will respond to their quandary, Joseph decided to ask God which church he should join. And at the tender age of fourteen, Joseph prayed and received the first of his many visions in what is often simply referred to as 'the vision.' Upon this questioning, God spoke to him and commanded him to join none of these churches as the true church of God was no longer present on earth. God told Smith that He would come to him later, and that Smith himself would be responsible for re-establishing God's covenant here on earth.

Smith did not keep the revelation to himself. He first related the vision to his family members and after their warm reception, he brought his news to the ministers of the various sects in town, who were not receptive to the news of his vision. Although it is often stated that Smith was ridiculed because of the vision itself, it is also likely that he was ridiculed for his vision because he was a mere treasure-seer. Despite the ridicule and opposition he was faced with, Smith remained steadfast in his testimony, and joined none of the churches. He waited for three years before he received the next vision, on September 21, 1823, when the angel Moroni came to him. Moroni (a prophet of God in the Book of Mormon) had been sent by God in spirit form to instruct Smith of the mission that he had to fulfil. Among other things, Smith was told of a book written on gold plates that was an account composed by former inhabitants of the Americas, and he was told of the two accompanying seer stones that would assist Smith with the translation of these plates. Subsequently, through the night, Moroni appeared two more times to repeat the original message with the admonitions of what would happen if Smith did not obey. He again appeared to Smith the following day, adding to his message that Smith was to inform his father of what had happened. After providing this explanation, Joseph's father concluded that Joseph had indeed communicated with a messenger of God.

Smith discovered the whereabouts of these gold plates but he was instructed to wait, and for the next four years, Moroni appeared to the young Smith on a series of occasions, each time instructing him further on the great mission he was to fulfil. In 1827, Smith began the process of translation, an arduous task that he completed with the assistance of a select few people who would be among the first to join his restored church. Oliver Cowdery was one of these assistants, and it was the two of them who were together on May 15, 1829 when they received a vision of John the Baptist who had been sent to restore the priesthood among them (see Section 2.4). It was soon after this visitation that the translation of the Book of Mormon was completed in 1829.

On April 6, 1830[10] in Seneca County, New York (barely one hundred miles from the Canadian border), Joseph Smith fulfilled yet another aspect of his mission--the restoration of the church of Jesus Christ, the church which later came to be known as 'The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.' From these earliest days, the church was a strong source of missionary activity sending expeditions out to neighbouring areas, west to Kirtland, Ohio, southwest to Jackson County, Missouri, and north into Canada. Within its first year, the church had a membership of two thousand (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1979: 36), but because of the increasing persecution in New York State, most of the members there relocated to the new LDS strongholds of Kirtland and Jackson County.

The seven years that the church was based in these two communities, located a thousand miles apart from one another, was a period of great hardship but, despite all odds, great development as well. During this time, Smith received revelations concerning some of the more fundamental aspects of LDS doctrine, and missionary work rapidly accelerated and even spread abroad. These revelations included the Word of Wisdom (see Section 3.3), the rejection of infant baptism, and the existence of a multi-tiered heaven. Also during this period in Kirtland, Smith modified the Bible, reputedly through divine revelation. The LDS believe that these revisions to the King James Bible have restored the Bible to its original state, and removed all of the corrupting passages that were altered after the deaths of the early Christians.

With these revelations, the LDS increasingly came to see themselves as distinct from non-believers and increasingly came to see the non-believers as corrupt and wicked. While they became increasingly independent and isolated from non-LDS communities in daily life, they continued to proselytise and preach to their neighbours about sins and misguided faiths. The LDS built their first temple in Kirtland, and LDS communities became more and more resilient and cohesive as they faced increasing pressures from the outside world to conform to the lifestyles of their neighbours. By 1838, tension had risen to such a point that the LDS abandoned their community of Kirtland to the vigilante opposition and left for Missouri to establish Zion (the new Jerusalem).

---

[10] The date of April 6 is believed to be particularly significant, as the LDS believe that it is the anniversary of the birth of Christ (Rulon T. Burton 1994: 328).

Zion proved to be overwrought with conflict, hatred, and intolerance directed by their neighbours who wanted the LDS to leave. By this time the LDS were such a cohesive religious, political, cultural, and economic group that their neighbours felt threatened and overwhelmed. Once again, the LDS were driven from their homes and relocated in Nauvoo, Illinois, where they started anew. Within a few years, the industrious LDS had transformed a tract of swampland into a prosperous little community, but political pressure continued to increase. In June of 1844, Joseph Smith and his elder brother Hyrum were arrested on the charge of treason. Despite being assured that they would be protected from vigilante justice, on June 27, a mob burst into the jail and murdered the two, while another prominent LDS member, John Taylor (who would become the third President) survived. Contrary to what the opposition had hoped for, the LDS did not fall apart at the death of their leader. After a lengthy period, Brigham Young assumed leadership of the church. While some opposed this decision and left to establish their own churches, the core of the group remained strong and cohesive.

Once the covenant had been re-established through the revelations of Smith, the LDS believe that God maintained this special relationship through a series of prophets within the church. These men are the presidents of the church (the current president Gordon B. Hinckley is the fifteenth in succession, beginning with Smith). This idea of having a representative here on earth is important to the LDS faith since it means that people have an open and continuing relationship with the heavens. Messengers of God are likely only to appear to the prophet, who alone has the authority to change church dogma, but the LDS believe that all people have a close relationship with God. Usually, this relationship is expressed through the reception of the Holy Spirit.[11] While the prophet may come from any walk of life, and undergoes the standard priesthood procedures, ultimately LDS members believe that God chooses him.

The LDS believe that having a living prophet is better than any prophet that lived in the past because it means that the heavens are not closed, and the Heavenly Father is able to communicate directly with His people. These revelations (compiled in the scriptures Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price), along with the Book of Mormon and the Bible, provide the basis of church doctrine. When God speaks through His prophet on any issue, the issue is then closed, because what He says through the prophet is the word and the will of God. Critics suggest the possibility that the president of the church could introduce corruption into the church, but the devout insist that this cannot happen. President Wilford Woodruff defended this belief when he stated on October 6, 1890 that:

> the Lord will never permit me or any other man who stands as president of this Church to lead you astray. It is not in the program. It is not in the mind of God. If I were to attempt that, the Lord would remove me out of my place, and so He will any other man who attempts to lead the children of men astray from the oracles of God and from their duty (1890: 212- 213, as recited in Burton 1994: 764).

---

[11] This reception of the Holy Spirit is referred to as a 'spiritual witness.' Rather than receiving an actual vision, people themselves experience (or witness) truth accompanied by what is reputedly a burning or tingling feeling. This experience leaves a person knowing that whatever he or she had been praying or thinking about is true.

2.3 Persecution and the Movement West

By the time of Joseph Smith's martyrdom, a cohesive LDS identity had formed. By gathering in particular geographic areas with firm parameters and boundaries, the LDS formed communities that were almost completely separate from the outside world. They had learned to work together in an efficient manner, followed certain prescribed codes of behaviour, and possessed a belief system that set them apart from their neighbours. They had economic self-sufficiency, had an intense loyalty to their fellow 'Saints,' and were united through a similar purpose in preparing Zion. They even possessed a similar sense of wariness towards the outside world that dealt with them so harshly (Ostling and Ostling 1999: 35-36). Long before Smith's martyrdom, the LDS were convinced that they were a chosen people and had a very firm conviction of their own identity as a people. With that peoplehood in mind, the LDS began their trek westward into the barren wilderness of the Great Basin in February 1846.

Brigham Young, Smith's successor, led the 'exodus,' as it is known. Like the Jews of antiquity, the LDS were a 'chosen people' and like the flight of the Jews from Egypt to an unseen promised land, the LDS saw their flight into the Great Basin as a journey into the promised land where at last they would be free from persecution and could establish the new Jerusalem. Hence, they referred to their great trek as 'the camp of Israel' (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1979:81). It was a harsh journey but overall, a general air of optimism prevailed. Much of the success behind this migration of twenty thousand people was a result of their willingness to work for the benefit of the entire group, as demonstrated through the construction of temporary lodging and cultivation of crops for the following groups.

The first of the LDS wagon trains reached the Salt Lake Valley on July 24, 1847 under the leadership of Brigham Young. Subsequently LDS communities celebrate this date as 'Pioneer Day'. One of Young's first official duties was to determine the location of the new temple, which would be the Salt Lake City temple. Even as members continued to come, life was a hardship, and it was a struggle to provide adequate supplies and lodging. In a twist of fate, the discovery of gold in California proved to be the salvation that the LDS needed. A sudden boom of immigrants tried to get out to the coast, and many of those immigrants were merchants attempting to bring supplies to the miners. Upon reaching Salt Lake City, however, the merchants discovered that their competition had shipped supplies out to California via the Cape, and were there already. These merchants were so eager to get west that they took whatever they could to sell their products in Salt Lake City and move on to the gold fields. So through the miscalculations and greed of others, the LDS profited by being able to purchase cheaply all of the supplies that they desired, including stock animals, wagons, food, and tools. Their physical survival was now assured.

The succeeding years were spiritually rich. Converts continued to stream in, and the LDS were preoccupied with the building of Zion--in both its spiritual and physical construction as they formed and built a city of their own which was relatively independent from the world. The settlers maintained the highly disciplined, co-operative network of planning and organisation that had sustained them across the prairies.

Their relative seclusion from the world did not last for long, as their Zion was threatened in July 1857 when they received news that the American government was sending in troops to investigate rumours that the LDS were rebelling against the government. With the legacy of vigilante justice still a recent part of their history, the LDS decided to delay the arrival of the army in whatever way they could, with such obstacles as burning bridges, and prairie fires. The army was so delayed that they had to stop to take winter quarters and only arrived in the spring of 1858. By this time the LDS had succeeded in convincing some political leaders in the east of their loyalty to the American union. The army left peacefully, and the 'Utah War' was over with no loss of life.

While this army campaign may have been the last real physical threat to the LDS people, criticism and persecution of church members was far from over. For well over a half century after Smith's martyrdom there was one particular issue that kept the church under watchful observation by both its neighbours and the government. This was their practice of polygamy, or as it is referred to by the LDS, 'plural marriage.'

Smith first received his revelation concerning plural marriage in 1842, but was only publicly revealed and widely taught to the church members after 1852. Contrary to the misunderstandings of many outsiders, though, plural marriage was never undertaken by the majority of the LDS population. It was only ever practised by the chosen few in the church leadership who were permitted to do so. Despite this restriction, its practice reflected a unique theological doctrine that inspired fear, and traditional Americans perceived it as a threat to the moral code and the institution of the family. In the nineteenth century, plural marriage was one of the eternal truths that the LDS Church proclaimed, because at this time, the idea of celestial exaltation (the ultimate salvation that can be obtained in the hereafter, see Section 6.5) was inextricably linked with plural marriage.

Reactions against the practice simmered until the American government began to pass a series of laws forbidding the practice. In 1882 with the passage of the Edmunds Act and the ruling that a man found with more than one wife could be fined or imprisoned, it became more difficult for the LDS to ignore the conflict. Daily life became disrupted as authorities sent more and more men to jail. Despite this pressure, church President Taylor counselled his people to hold fast to their beliefs as they should fulfill God's will (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1979: 133), not that of the state. In 1887 the Edmunds Act was amended into the Edmunds-Tucker Act. This increased pressure on the members who practised plural marriage, and increased pressure on the church itself by disincorporating the church and seizing property and other assets. The succeeding president of the church, Wilford Woodruff, addressed this crisis in 1890 with the 'Manifesto' which officially brought an end to the practice within the church. Unofficially, the practice lingered for a while before it actually completely came to an end.

One of the more significant results of the government and public harassment of the LDS church in regard to plural marriage, was the departure of many prominent members for other regions where they could evade American laws and censure. These regions included Arizona (where the government had minimal influence in the remote regions), Mexico, and Alberta. The emigration from Utah and Idaho to Canada was recommended by President John Taylor, an Englishman who had immigrated to Canada, and upon conversion to the LDS faith, had emmigrated to the United States.

Taylor selected Charles Ora Card to choose the land in an 1886 expedition. Then in March 1887, the first of more than forty families left to relocate in the Canadian settlement. Not only was there a significant expanse of land to be settled, but the Canadian government had also proven to be open and welcoming to a variety of cultural and religious groups that wished to leave their homelands, including the Ukrainians and the Hutterites. A number of LDS members who had worked in constructing the Canadian railroad had already brought back positive reports of the land and people.

In general, the Canadian government and Canadian citizens accepted the LDS settlers, albeit somewhat hesitantly. At the time that the LDS settlers were coming from the United States, Canada was attempting to distinguish itself from the United States and was wary of any potential Americanising influences (Leonard Arrington 1990: 15). The loyalty of the LDS settlers to the government of Canada, however, was never really in doubt, given the sense of betrayal and bitterness many of the LDS settlers felt towards the American government for the persecution they had endured. Consequently, for the most part, the LDS settlers were willing to become Canadian. As central European immigration to the prairies increased, particularly with the Hutterite settlements in southern Alberta, the LDS were considered more and more Canadian (Howard Palmer 1990: 126). Additionally, rumours of polygamy had preceded the arrival of the LDS and the government moved to establish laws that would prevent it. This issue did not prove to be much of a problem, as the LDS men who came to Canada usually brought only one wife and family, leaving their other families behind.

2.4 Restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ and the Priesthood

One of the more significant themes of the LDS faith is the concept of restoration. The LDS believe that Jesus established His church here on earth, 'the Church of Jesus Christ' as it was known, but within about thirty years after the death of Christ, the organisation and doctrine that He had established was changed and corrupted because of internal dissension and disruption. Through the prophet Joseph Smith, God renewed his covenant with His people and 'the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' was established.

The period after the disintegration of the Church of Jesus Christ and before the establishment of the LDS church is referred to as 'the Great Apostasy.' The LDS believe that there have been many occasions throughout the history of humankind when people have become distant from God and have broken their covenants, but none of these apostasies has been as severe or significant as the one following the death and resurrection of Christ.

While Christianity hardly disappeared after these years of persecution, the LDS believe that the pure Church of Jesus Christ became tainted and corrupted. They believe that this apostasy was prophesied in the New Testament (2 Thessalonians 2: 1-4). False concepts were introduced, and the original structure and principles of the church were distorted. The process of corruption, this universal apostasy, began while the apostles were still living and accelerated after their deaths. No amount of reform could ever restore the purity of the Church of Christ, and so it was necessary for God to begin completely anew His church on earth with the aid of a prophet.

Two distinct levels of the priesthood may be held in this Church, the Aaronic and the Melchizedek.[12] The Aaronic priesthood is bestowed upon young men in their early adolescence, and the Melchizedek is usually granted while the men are still in their twenties. Both priesthoods are bestowed through the ordinance of 'the laying on of hands,'[13] a practice that is traced back to the time of Adam and maintained until well after the time of Moses, into the era in which the New Testament was written down.

Moses, a priest ordained by God, ordained Aaron in such a manner (Exodus 28:1; Hebrews 5:4). All the prophets of the Old Testament are believed to have held the Melchizedek priesthood. Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek (Abraham 1; 2-5; Hebrews 7: 1-3), who was the king of Salem. Melchizedek was revered for being a devout and loyal priest who helped many people repent and become righteous.

---

[12] Only men are ordained into the LDS priesthood. The Reorganised Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the RLDS church), which diverged from the LDS church after the death of Joseph Smith over questions of leadership, introduced the ordination of women in 1984, but this policy has met great controversy, and the LDS church remains firm in the position that only men are called to the priesthood.

[13] The LDS believe that, through the laying on of hands, the recipient is literally having the hand of the Lord placed upon him or her (Bruce McConkie 1979: 438).

The Aaronic priest may perform the ordinances of baptism, but those who hold the Melchizedek priesthood possess the full powers of the priesthood, and literally possess the power and authority to act in the name of God. Melchizedek priesthood holders may have the power of God, but only as long as they are fulfilling God's will. They also have the authority to lead the administration of the church and to bring the gospel to people everywhere. Within the Melchizedek priesthood, there are many different offices that might be held, and the priesthood holders are assigned (or called) to these positions according to their experience and dedication. They still possess the same power of the priesthood, but are given extra responsibilities. For example, the president of the church is also a holder of the Melchizedek priesthood.

The priesthood is considered to be a service calling, a blessing bestowed from God to be used to help serve other people. The authentic priesthood was lost after the time of Christ's disciples as part of the Great Apostasy. It was restored only through Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in May 1829 with the Aaronic priesthood, and the Melchizedek shortly thereafter. With the ordination into the Melchizedek priesthood, they alone would have the same priesthood authority as was held in the early church, and according to LDS belief they alone have the proper priesthood authority today on earth.

As such, baptisms and other ordinances performed by priests or ministers of other Christian churches are not valid and will not enable the person to achieve salvation. Unlike other Christian denominations that restrict salvation for only those within the Christian membership, the LDS allow the possibility of salvation for everyone. As long as certain ordinances offered by the LDS are undertaken in the temple, whether the person is dead or alive, everyone has the option of accepting the doctrine of Christ as the LDS understand it. This idea will be discussed further in the next chapter, with regard to the baptisms for the dead.

2.5 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has explored some of the events that helped to develop notions of LDS identity and the tendency of LDS members to distinguish themselves from those outside of the LDS faith (the non-believers). This distinction is readily apparent in contemporary life as only those who have displayed utmost devotion and commitment to the church are allowed access to the temple. This is particularly significant as the LDS believe the temple to be the most sacred place on earth, and the only earthly dwelling where a person can enter the presence of God.

Chapter 3
The Temple: Centre of the LDS Faith

3.1 Introduction

At the very core of worship and faith in the LDS church is the need to partake in temple ordinances. The LDS meet regularly at their church meetinghouses (see Glossary) for services and activities, but it is within the temple that they perform the ordinances necessary for maintaining a covenant with God. As the place of worship, the LDS consider the temple to be 'The House of the Lord,' and LDS scripture describes the temple as "a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:119 and 109:8). V. A. Wood refers to the temple "as a beacon on a hill, a lighthouse to guide church members through life's troubled waters" (1989: preface). The temple is symbolically important to their sense of restoration and connection with the Christians of antiquity as well as for the symbolic ordinances necessary for the attainment of eternal salvation. The visual and the architectural symbolism of these temples reflect many of the inherent theological concepts of the LDS church, for it is at these temples that the ultimate services to humanity and to God are performed.

No one true accepted definition of symbolism exists, since this term is used in many different ways and with different connotations. For the purposes of this study, symbolism is perceived as being part of a binary relationship, and a symbol is interpreted as being a part of something or representative of something. What the symbol conveys is its 'meaning,' or what Edmund Leach refers to as its 'message' (1976: 11). Symbolically, the temple is particularly significant to the LDS because it is part of a binary pair. By representing the sacred realm, the temple is in opposition to the profaneness of the outer secular world.

Each LDS temple is supervised by a temple president and his wife, the matron, who serve for a period of around three years. By comparison with many other Christian denominations, the LDS church has a large volunteer base that supports the day-to-day operations of the temples. The larger temples require a volunteer workforce of around two thousand people while smaller temples, such as that of Cardston, Alberta, require a volunteer workforce around one hundred and fifty people. "Although instructions and ordinances are the same in all LDS temples, the size of the temple and the number of patrons using it alter the procedures from temple to temple" (David H. Yarn, Jr. and Marilyn S. Yarn 1992: 1445).

Typically, temple work is conducted by the older members of the church, usually after retirement, thus by people who have more time to devote to the sacred work. One of the participants in my study commented that "we're encouraged to go once a month anyways, and for those who are older ... it is such a rewarding feeling for the grandpas and grandmas who have no one left at home, no purpose in life, and all of a sudden, they have this great work that they have to do" (Interview with 'Betty,' August 8, 2000).

LDS temples are designed so that they are oriented towards the four cardinal directions of north, south, west and east, with the entrance directed towards Jerusalem. According to Matthew 24:27, Jesus himself compared His second arrival to the arrival of the sun each day in the east. On the top of many of these temples is the bronze-coated statue of the angel Moroni. According to the faithful, Moroni, who is prominent in the Book of Mormon, was a prophet of God on the American continent who died over a thousand years ago. In angel form, Moroni appeared to the prophet Joseph Smith to reveal God's message of restoration. Thus, in the LDS tradition, the angel Moroni is a messenger of God, and symbolic of these LDS beliefs is a statue of the angel Moroni holding a trumpet heralding the second coming of Christ. The Salt Lake City temple features the statue on top of its east centre spire. In Los Angeles, even though the temple technically faces Southeast, the statue itself is directed east.

The layout of the LDS temples has been specified through revelations. The typical modern layout is quite different from that of the first temple in Kirtland, Ohio (dedicated March 1836), since at that time many of the sacred ordinances had not yet been revealed to Joseph Smith. To members, the dedication of this first temple was a sign of the community's commitment to following God's revelations, and completion of the Kirtland temple, therefore, was paramount for encouraging God to reveal His plan of salvation.

A number of revelations that are central to the LDS faith were revealed at the time of its dedication, including the baptisms for the dead, which were first performed in 1840. The second temple, located in Nauvoo, Illinois and dedicated in April 1846, was the first to incorporate the performance of this sacred ordinance in its architectural design. Since then, temple designs have been modified to complement the changing revelations directed towards the prophets.

It is regularly claimed that the Salt Lake City temple is the most widely recognised symbol of the LDS faith.[14] Brigham Young (successor to Joseph Smith as leader and prophet of the LDS church) selected the location for the Salt Lake City temple in 1847 as one of his first duties after the LDS settlers arrived in the area. As the LDS settlers faced great hardships in their early settlement days, construction of the temple only began in 1853 and was completed forty years later, with the dedication on April 6, 1893. To this day, the temple square in Salt

---

[14] This is stated in various promotional materials, pamphlets and the like, published by the church.

Lake City remains both the spiritual and administrative centre of the LDS church, and receives millions of visitors every year. The Salt Lake City temple was the sixth LDS temple, but one of the first to include all of the sacred ordinances in its architectural design. This temple is not located on a raised geographical plane, but rather on flat level ground. Because of its sheer stature and location amidst the other sacred buildings of temple square, the temple still remains a prominent focal point in the area.

As noted in the previous chapter, the person who initiated LDS settlement in western Canada was Charles Ora Card, who founded the community of Cardston in 1887. These settlers originally came to Canada with the official support of the church in Salt Lake City, in hopes of avoiding persecution in the United States for the practice of polygamy. The Cardston temple, the eighth in total but the first outside of the United States, was dedicated in August 1923, after taking ten years to complete.[15] Because the Cardston temple was the only Canadian temple to be built in more than half a century, it is a significant focal point of Canadian LDS history, and even of the north-western United States during the many years when the Cardston temple was the closest temple available in which people could worship and perform the sacred ordinances.

Church authorities decided that because it was the first temple to be built outside of the United States, the Cardston temple must look distinct (although the architectural design of this temple later influenced other temples). This temple faces east and is located on the highest geographical plane in the Cardston area. This height serves a dual purpose: the temple is more prominent, and the temple represents the junction of the celestial and the terrestrial. Because they were deemed unnecessary, spires were omitted from the top of the temple like those typical of the earlier temples. As such, there is no statue of the angel Moroni.

---

[15] The next temple to be built in Canada was in Toronto. This forty-sixth temple was dedicated in August 1990 and more recent temples have also been built in Edmonton, Regina, and Halifax.

Like most of the temples, the Cardston temple is constructed of granite and reinforced concrete, built according to the LDS claim that it will last a millennium. Even though the architectural design of the Cardston temple is somewhat different from its predecessors, the straight lines with an absence of curves have retained their importance. The temples appear to be somewhat 'blocky' in that each section is oriented towards one of the four cardinal directions.

3.2 A Relationship Between Ancient Temple and LDS Temple Use

The temple, as the centre of the LDS faith, has played an important role in LDS worship since the church's infancy.[16] The LDS, however, do not believe that the use of the temple in the Christian faith began at this time, but in fact, claim that their use of the temple is a restoration of the temple as it was used in antiquity. The LDS believe that in the ancient Middle East, the temple was the centre of the Jewish and later Christian community, and represented both the ability of the community to function and the ability of the community to maintain a relationship with God.

Stephan D. Ricks (1992: 1463) outlines six features that demonstrate the distinction of the ancient temple from other places of community worship. First of all, boundaries were established to distinguish the temple from the secular world. Secondly, the rituals performed in the temple were kept secret from non-participants.[17] Thirdly, the temple was built so that it was oriented in a manner that coincided with the four cardinal directions of north, south, west, and east. Because of its sacredness, the temple was also constructed so that it expressed "the idea of ascent toward heaven..." (Ricks 1992: 1463). The fifth component was that the building of a temple must be the product of a revelation, that God must command the construction of every temple to a prophet. And finally, the temple was a place of sacrifice, and the only place where sacrifice could be conducted.

---

[16] Even though the LDS church was only officially established in 1830, the need for a temple was so pressing that the first LDS temple was completed in 1836, in Kirtland, Ohio. This temple was later destroyed by opponents of the LDS church.

LDS temples retain several of these characteristics. Members perceive the temple to be separate from the secular world (usually with the addition of walls or some other physical marker), and it is blessed as a sacred place. The intimate details of the temple ordinances are not disclosed to the public. Even the LDS practitioners are discouraged from discussing these intimate details of temple worship outside of the temple, as the temple ordinances are sacred and respect for their sacredness means that the sacred details must not leave sacred ground. I was told repeatedly during my field research, almost as if it were a litany, that the temple rites are 'sacred, not secret.' Additionally, one person informed me that "it isn't like I couldn't tell you, but its just that you wouldn't understand it" and furthermore, if just anyone was allowed in, "it wouldn't be a sacred place to us because everybody would destroy it because they wouldn't understand it..." (Interview with 'Anastasia,' August 7, 2000).

As discussed previously, the orientation of the temple has maintained its importance, and LDS doctrine insists that they must all be directed towards the east, towards Jerusalem. Ricks mentions that not all actually do so, but he does not discuss this issue any further.

---

[17] The LDS believe that it was in part this need for secrecy that contributed to the collapse of temple use in early Christian worship. The persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians prevented the true knowledge of the faith from being passed on to future generations, but it was because of the very sanctity of the temple rites that the early Christians refused to disclose them to their persecutors who would have defiled the covenants of God.

LDS temples also have an inscription, 'Holiness To The Lord,' located above the ceremonial main entrance. This inscription represents the spiritual mindset of each practitioner as he or she worships in the temple. In the effort to represent the temple's ascension from the earth towards heaven, the modern temples, like their predecessors, are separated into three sections. As one moves through these sections, one is progressively moving higher in the building, and as a whole, these three sections represent the progressive ascent towards the kingdom of God. As revelations formed an important part of the Old Testament, revelations have continued to play an important role in the administering of the LDS church and the selection of temple locations.

While these first five characteristics link the temples of antiquity and the modern world, LDS temples are no longer used for sacrificial rites as it is believed that sacrifices are no longer necessary to renew the covenant between God and His followers after the sacrifice of Christ. Blood sacrifices then were the predecessor to the ultimate sacrifice of Christ, no longer necessary after his atonement for the sins of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Only in the temple, however, do members learn true appreciation of Christ's sacrifice.

3.3 The Temple Recommend

Sacred ordinances such as the initiatory ordinances of anointing and washing, baptisms for the dead, family and marital sealings, and endowment ceremonies are performed only in the temple. These ordinances are at the heart of LDS spirituality, and the LDS quest for redemption and eternal salvation. Accessibility, however, to the temple after its consecration is restricted to only those baptised and fully practising LDS members. Access is granted through obtaining a 'temple recommend,' an identification card that is certified annually by the local bishop and then verified by the stake presidency.[18] Temple recommends are only granted to those LDS members who demonstrate that they are obeying the lifestyle tenets of the church (such as the Word of Wisdom guidelines that forbid the use of tobacco and alcohol), and are living their lives according to the plan of salvation. Near the entrance, inside of the temple, there is an attendant who verifies that people have their current temple recommend.

The temple is not merely a representation of the sacred world. It is a place where people believe that they have the opportunity to become closer to God than they could anywhere else on earth, and where the righteous are most likely to feel the presence of the Holy Spirit. The participants in my study all believed that the temple is a guiding force in their lives, inspiring them to be better people and reinforcing their commitment to God and His covenants. As such, access to the temple is restricted only to the most righteous, and this restriction is commanded by God.

There are about ten questions asked in the annual interview for the temple recommend. A person has to be a baptised member in good standing with the church. That is, the member has to be an active member within the church who does not question or confront the authority of the prophet and the official church doctrine. A member must pay ten percent of his or her annual salary to the church, and a member must not be affiliated with any other religious organisation. In other words, a person cannot be both LDS and Buddhist.

One has to be old enough to participate in the endowment ceremony--the age of nineteen--in order to qualify for the temple recommend. There is also a temple recommend of sorts for LDS youth who are permitted to go to the temple after the age of twelve in order to participate as proxies for the baptisms for the dead (often referred to by the LDS as vicarious baptisms). The requirements are essentially the same but limit access to the temple, restricting the youth to the baptismal room. Vicarious baptisms actually happen to be one of the organised activities for which LDS youth groups such as the Young Women's Group (a social group that consists of all adolescent females in the ward) go on field trips. These temple recommends for youth are not, however, to be confused with the temple recommend that allows full access to the temple.

---

[18] The LDS 'stake' is comparable to a diocese, consisting of local 'wards,' which in turn are comparable to parishes (see glossary).

The interviewee for a temple recommend is asked whether or not he or she is honest when dealing with others, and whether or not he or she is either practising chastity before marriage or fidelity within marriage. One of the more important qualifications for the recommend is the Word of Wisdom, a law of good health (see Glossary), although this only became a requirement in the early twentieth century. Originally, the Word of Wisdom was advice for healthy living as opposed to the current interpretation that this is one of God's covenants that must be obeyed (see Ostling and Ostling 1999: 178).

The LDS believe that the spirit is reunited with the physical body at the time of the resurrection, and thus, it becomes imperative that LDS practitioners follow a certain lifestyle in preparation. Since the physical body is sacred, as it is a tabernacle for the spirit, the body must be treated as a holy vessel. As such, degradation of the human body (such as the use of alcohol or physical alterations like tattooing) is an attack against ourselves and an authentic spirituality.[19] The stipulations for living a righteous life regarding maintenance of a pure physical form are outlined in what LDS practitioners call the 'Word of Wisdom' in their scripture Doctrine and Covenants (Section 89).

---

[19] This devotion to the human body and avoidance of degradation renders it important to abstain from the use of cremation in burial practices.

The Word of Wisdom calls for a number of food prohibitions such as alcohol, tobacco and hot drinks (due to the caffeine present in coffee and some teas, but non-caffeininated hot beverages are allowed). At the same time, this scripture advises people to generously consume herbs, fruits, vegetables and grain, and to sparingly consume meat (as it is implied that a diet generous in meat is unhealthy). The Word of Wisdom concludes with God (through his prophet Joseph Smith) declaring that:

> all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow in their bones; and shall find wisdom and great treasures, and shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint. And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them (Doctrine and Covenants 89: 18 -21).

Some LDS members regard the Word of Wisdom as yet another test of faith, a way of determining those people who are willing to follow the word of the Lord. One of the participants in my study commented "This is my own personal opinion but I don't know how real important it is to the Lord as much as it is 'will you follow me? Do you have the faith to do exactly as I say?' " (Interview with 'Betty,' August 8, 2000).

3.4 Anointing and Washing Ordinances

Upon entering the temple, people are separated by gender into different rooms for the initiatory ordinances of anointing and washing. People must wear the temple garments, which are simple white clothing free of any ornamentation, and they must change their shoes. As discussed in Achieving a Celestial Marriage (the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1992: 51), the white clothing represents the equality of all people in the eyes of God and Jesus Christ. By this simple exchange of clothing and the purification rites, a symbolic exchange from the secular to the sacred also takes place. Once in this sacred state, people are expected to follow certain standards of behaviour. They must speak quietly and think only 'holy' thoughts in order to achieve communion with God.

The concept of boundary as Leach discusses it (1976: 33-36) is readily apparent in the symbolic importance of the LDS temple. The primary identifying feature of the LDS temple is that it is a sacred space kept separate from the secular world. There is often a physical marker in the form of a wall or fence that draws a line between the meeting of the two worlds. After proving that the person is worthy enough to enter this sacred space, he or she must go through this series of purification rites to cleanse him or her of any lingering traces of the secular world.

Leach states that "when we use symbols (either verbal or non-verbal) to distinguish one class of things or actions from another we are creating artificial boundaries in a field which is 'naturally' continuous" (1976: 33). This transition from one state to another blatantly distinguishes the secular world as being impure, unclean, and a state far away from the presence of God. LDS belief in this distinction between the sacred and the secular is interesting considering the LDS emphasis that daily lives must be lived in a holy way, as close to God as possible so that one may achieve a good place in the afterlife. It is likely then that the reason why it is so important to visit the temple regularly is that no matter how holy one's life is, there is always an element of the profane in the outer world, and only by entering the presence of God in the temple can one escape those profane elements.

These anointing and washing ordinances can be further analysed using the theoretical work of Victor Turner (1969) on rites of separation, liminality, and reintegration. Through these processes of washing and anointing, the person is cleansed of polluting elements from the secular world and symbolically transformed into the sacred. Upon entering this liminal stage, the person is removed from the rigours and contaminations of the secular world: people leave behind the ordinary routines of daily life. Since people are wearing the temple clothing and shoes, their clothing is liberated from any 'worldly' adornments, and secular modes of dress that display status cease to exist. Within the temple, all secular standards of status cease to exist, and any inequity of the initiates before the eyes of God and Jesus Christ are determined by the levels of faith and righteousness alone. Thus, as long as the individuals remain in the temple, they are part of what Turner (1969: 94-165) refers to as 'communitas,' where the group of participants leave the secular world behind and partake in an experience absent from social status in a manner that would not occur outside of the sacred boundaries.

Once the participants leave the temple after the endowment ceremony and reintegrate into society, they retain a certain sense of communitas in that they are obliged to wear the 'temple garments' for the rest of their lives. Even after their deaths, their bodies are dressed with these white garments. They are very simple and plain white undergarments that outsiders regard with a great deal of suspicion and misunderstanding, and have even sometimes been labeled as 'magical' or even 'satanical' underwear.

Like the temple rites, the temple garments are considered to be sacred, not secret, but over the duration of my field research, I found that the participants were usually quite willing and receptive to talking about the basic meanings and functions of the garments as well as some of the stereotypes held by outsiders. One of the first points that was continually raised was that the garments are a 'shield and protection,' and that they serve two purposes. They are a reminder of their faith and covenants to God, and secondly, they are a reminder of modesty (while the garments are not 'bulky,' they do prevent the wearer from wearing the skimpiest of fashions). The garments offer protection only so far as they are a reminder to live righteously, and, by being more aware of God, the wearer is less susceptible to the wiles and manipulations of Satan. Essentially then the temple garments are a physical expression of a person's inner commitment to fulfilling God's covenants. Additionally, by wearing these garments, the LDS are reminded everyday of the sacredness of the temple and the need to maintain that sense of the sacred as they go about their lives in the secular world.

A possible link exists between the LDS temple garments and the Ghost Dance millenarian movement among plains North American aboriginals. By the time of the second Ghost Dance in the late nineteenth century, the LDS had had settlements in the west for nearly half a century and temples where they took part in rituals wearing their temple garments. The anthropologist James Mooney (as discussed by Alice Beck Kehoe 1989: 13) has suggested that the LDS temple garments spawned the holy shirts of the Ghost Dance. As a 'shield and protection,' the temple garments help protect the wearer from harm, and in Mooney's time in the late nineteenth century, a popular belief circulated that the garments were so powerful that they could even protect the wearer from bullets. Of course, this belief is similar to the one held by Ghost Dance participants regarding their own holy shirts. The connection between the LDS and the Ghost Dance participants stems from the fact that many aboriginals joined the church and could have worn their garments in celebrating the imminent arrival of Christ for the millennium.

3.5 Baptisms for the Dead

The temple is divided into various sections, each ordinance having its own particular section for its ritual performances. The baptisms for the dead occur in the baptistry room, near the front of the temple, which has a substantial baptismal font that rests on the backs and shoulders of twelve gold coloured oxen. These oxen represent the twelve tribes of Israel, and furthermore, the twelve oxen are split into groups of three, with each group facing one of the four cardinal directions. Baptisms of LDS members take place in the church meetinghouses as part of the regular services. The baptisms conducted at the temple are special ordinances for the dead as the LDS believe that the ordinances necessary for salvation must be performed for the dead as well as for the living.[20] The LDS believe that there are certain things that the devout need to perform as earthly ordinances, and these are baptisms, sealings and endowments, all of which may be performed by proxy for the dead. Since one needs to be baptised in order to have eternal life, the church has undertaken the tremendous responsibility of ensuring that all who have ever lived will be baptised and thus have equal opportunity for acceptance or rejection of the gospel, its laws, and ordinances.

One of the participants in my study conveyed the popular LDS sentiment when she commented that "it's amazing that the Lord sets out a plan and He fulfils it for everyone, and because we weren't born at a time where the gospel was on the earth, why should we be punished and not be able to have the same blessings that other people have? Why would He keep it from one generation or time period of life?" (Interview with 'Bertha,' August 8, 2000). As with all of the ordinances performed vicariously, the dead have the option of choosing to accept it or reject it, and it is the general opinion that "we believe that after people die... you're going to have a greater knowledge of why you were here and where you have gone after you died, that you might desire to have that work done for you"

---

[20] This interpretation is drawn from 1 Corinthians 15:29 where Paul wrote "Else what shall they do which are baptised for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptised for the dead?" The LDS believe that baptisms for the dead were performed by the early Christians but the practice was lost during the great apostasy and only restored through the revelations of the prophet Joseph Smith.

(Interview with Camille,' August 9, 2000).

The concern for the salvation of all humanity has spawned an intense genealogical interest and what has become known as the Name Extraction Program. Once the name and personal information of the deceased is identified, it is possible through a proxy of the same sex to perform all of these ordinances necessary for exaltation. People involved in the Name Extraction Program do not worry about an absence of records for the majority of human existence, believing it to be merely a matter of waiting for the prophets to reveal the information.

Typically, the vicarious baptisms and other ordinances take place one year after the death unless authorisation comes from the Presidency of the church to do it earlier. Most of these baptisms are performed for relatives and ancestors of members, and at present, the church cannot perform baptisms for people who are not related to members without the written consent of their families. However, this seems a bit dubious considering the publicity generated by people shocked to discover that relatives or public figures (from American presidents to Catholic saints) have been baptised (Ostling and Ostling 1999: 189-190).

3.6 Sealing Rites

Marital and family sealing rites bind the family unit together for all of eternity. This "process of sealing families together for time and for eternity is the very essence of temple work, and an important foundation stone of LDS theology" (Robert L. Simpson, 1992: 1457). The most important institution in the life of the LDS is that of the family, and as such, it appears logical that the church's eschatology of eternal life would retain such an influence. The sealing of the family enables family members to be together forever, through life and death, mortality and immortality.

These sealings, however, are 'conditional,' rather than a strict guarantee. Thus, the members have to live righteously and be faithful to their covenants if they are to be resurrected together as a complete family unit.[21] If for example, a member of a family becomes 'inactive,' and turns his or her back on- the church, he or she will not be a part of the eternal family unit.

Each temple has more than one sealing room because so many people require its use. This ordinance is so sacred that people will spend their life savings if necessary in order to travel to the closest temple with their family to have it performed. At the front of the room is an altar that the couple or family kneel on in order to receive the sealing from the officiator. Mirrors are symbolically placed in the sealing rooms as reminders that one should reflect on the concept of eternity. By having mirrors opposite one another on the walls, one feels as if one is looking into infinity (personal communication during the Edmonton temple open house tour on December 4, 1999).

When an LDS couple get married, they have the option of being married in the temple (if they both have their temple recommends and have taken out their endowments) or being married in a church service if they cannot be married in the temple. A couple has to be married in the temple if they are to be sealed to their children. If a couple is married there, then any children born after that marriage are automatically sealed to them. This is known as being 'born under the covenant.' If a couple had children prior to the temple wedding, their children have to be sealed to them in a special sealing rite. The temple wedding lasts about two hours and is performed by a 'sealer.' A sealer, as with every position in the church, has to be 'called,' and has to be a worthy Melchizedek priesthood holder. Generally, the sealer has already served as a bishop, stake president, or in some other significant position in the high priesthood, but only a priest called to that position may perform that ordinance.

---

[21] These beliefs regarding the unification of the family in the next life have some parallels among the Merina peoples of Madagascar, as discussed in Maurice Bloch's ethnography From Blessing to Violence (1986).

These sealings are dependent on a marital unit. That is, a sealed husband and wife without children are still a family unit but a never-married parent may not be sealed to his or her children as a family. If a LDS member is married to a non-member, after both have died somebody should perform a vicarious sealing for them. If a couple was sealed in the temple and later divorced because one person was unfaithful to the covenants, say by committing adultery, then a cancellation of the sealing could take place. The person who had remained faithful to the covenants would still be sealed to his or her family, but not the spouse. In reply to a letter written by a recently divorced LDS woman who was concerned for her children, the president of the church stated, "Don't fret, because the children will follow the righteous mother. And your job is to be righteous..." (Interview with 'Jacqueline,' August 18, 2000).

3.7 The Endowment Ceremony

As mentioned previously, people need to receive their endowment before they may be married in the temple, but when a person is already married to a non-member without ever having received the endowment, the person must gain the spouse's permission before an endowment may be taken out. As one informant stated, the church does not "want to see anything happen to our family, and so, in order for me to go to the temple, they want to know that my family will support me, that he's OK with it, and that'll be an OK thing for our family" (Interview with 'Bonnie,' August 8, 2000). Thus, just because a person is married to a non-member and cannot be married or sealed in the temple does not restrict a person from receiving the endowment as long as the person has the permission of the spouse. Once the Bishop has determined that the initiate is ready to make the commitment, the initiate goes through a series of discussions with church officials as preparation for the endowment and the initiate is ready to proceed.

The endowment ceremony was first performed in 1842 but has subsequently been modified several times since then, in order to serve the changing needs of the LDS. The endowment is essentially a specialised and holy course of instruction that binds people into a covenant with God, and is based upon re-enactments of various scriptural images. The initiates promise to abide by God's laws and to remain true to the covenant, and in turn, they are promised that God will endow them with many blessings.

The rooms used for the endowment ordinances are opulently decorated, and images of these rooms are freqyently displayed in temple books and pamphlets. These rooms are decorated according to various theological themes such as the representations of the various degrees of glory--the celestial, the terrestrial, and the telestial.[22] To separate the celestial room from the terrestrial, a veil is hung "which suggests through furnishings and decor the peace, beauty, and glory the highest degree of heaven" (Immo Luschin 1992: 1447). The veil symbolises the physical distance between us and God, particularly as it is a reminder of the promise that those who will enter the celestial kingdom will be living in the presence of their Heavenly Father. Additionally, the veil is a symbolic reminder of the divine sentinels that will be guarding the entrance to the celestial kingdom.

The LDS believe that through the course of eternity, each person is granted through the gift of free agency (see Section 4.2), the ability to make choices that affect one's progression, essentially, one's ability to gain experiences and knowledge. The LDS ideology of eternal progression is an essential component of the endowment ordinance as the temple becomes "a presentation in figurative terms, of the pattern and journey of life on earth" (Hugh W. Nibley 1992: 1458). The rich decor of these rooms reflects this theme of eternal progression as each room becomes progressively more opulent.

---

[22] The telestial glory is the lowest kingdom of glory which will be inhabited by people who led 'worldly' lives and were thus, vulnerable to the temptations offered by Satan.

Originally, this ordinance was performed through a series of different rooms, which would instruct the initiate through means of painted murals. These murals featured stories from both the Bible and the Book of Mormon. With the incorporation of film technology, in the form of film projectors and the like, the visual journey through a series of painted rooms is no longer necessary. It is possible then to perform the endowment ceremony in just one room in the more modern temples, and they may even be presented to large groups at regular intervals if necessary.[23] For example, the newly built Edmonton temple, dedicated in December 1999, does not require a series of different rooms to perform the endowment ceremony. Instead, the endowment rooms feature subtlety placed screens. The use of film has also been advantageous in bringing these ordinances abroad, increasing the number of languages in which the endowment ordinance ceremony may be performed.

After receiving this instruction, the next stage of the endowment ceremony consists of a declaration of covenant before the final stage of the ordinance in which the recipient gains an awareness of the divine presence. At this point, participants believe that the Holy Spirit becomes an integral part of the person. Only after a person has received the endowment, may he or she may act as a proxy for some of the vicarious ordinances.

In the Cardston temple, being one of the early temples, the endowment ceremony is conducted through a series of five rooms. Beginning in the creation room, the initiates are then led through the garden room (referring to the need for the atonement of Christ after the sins of Adam and Eve), the telestial room (which represents the world as we currently know it), the terrestrial room (which represents the world in the millennial period after the second coming of Christ), and the celestial room (which represents the highest degree of glory in heaven).

---

[23] Other more recent changes to the endowment ceremony reflect a greater emphasis on an equal partnership between spouses and a greater tolerance for other Christian churches (John D. Charles 1999: 3).

The Cardston temple is shaped in the design of the Maltese Cross. Projecting from the centre of the temple are four sections for the various ordinances (initiatory rites of anointing and washing, sealing rites, baptistery, and endowments), with each section facing one of the four cardinal directions. Beginning in the baptistry room, one progressively moves in a circular upwards direction within the temple, going up a couple of stairs to each room and thereby moving upwards both literally and spiritually until one arrives in the celestial room at the end (Wood 1989: 51-59). Because the celestial room represents the highest degree of glory in heaven, it happens to be the most beautiful and opulent room of every temple and ultimately "symbolises the great accomplishments and rich eternal rewards of attaining exaltation in the celestial kingdom of God" (Charles 1999: 96).

The endowment is essentially the most significant and meaningful ordinance of the LDS ordinances, and it is through the endowment that the LDS learn how to gain access to the celestial kingdom. The second prophet, Brigham Young, provided a clear description of what this endowment means:

> Your endowment is to receive all those ordinances in the house of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, being enabled to give them the key words, the signs and tokens pertaining to the holy Priesthood, and gain your eternal exaltation in spite of earth and hell (1941 [1853]: 416).

In other words, the endowment is an instruction on what people need to know in order to get into the celestial kingdom. When Young refers to 'key words,' he is primarily referring to the new name that the initiates receive. Not only does this new name serve as one of the key words necessary to walk by the sentinels, but it also "symbolises the new covenant relationship with God..." (Charles 1999: 64). As with many things regarding the temple, this new name is not discussed outside of the temple because of its sanctity, not secrecy. The endowment ceremony is so inherently crucial to one's exaltation that once one has received the endowment, one continues to go and be initiated in the rites for the rest of one's life.

The early practices of the endowment ceremony show some tangible links to Masonic rituals, although this issue is very sensitive for the church. As a number of the early church leaders, including Joseph Smith, were Master Masons, it is not altogether surprising that there should be similarities. The link is controversial, of course, since according to LDS theology Smith received the instructions for the endowment through revelation. Smith himself explained, however, that similarities existed because the Masonic rites were remnants of the ancient rites that had become corrupted during the great apostasy.

The endowment ceremony that Smith revealed, then, was a restoration of the one that had originally been performed in early Christianity (Charles 1999: 28), and was only revealed to Smith after he had prayed to God about questions he had after going through the Masonic rites. Smith became a Master Mason in March 1842 and revealed the endowment in May 1842. A number of distinct similarities between the endowment and Masonic rites include acts of washing and anointing, a metaphorical journey presented in a creation drama, a new name, ritual clothing worn while passing through a veil that suggests an ascent to a 'celestial lodge,' obligations of morality, penalty oaths, and even the use of the word 'exalted' to represent the achievement of a higher state (Ostling and Ostling 1999: 194-195).[24] Furthermore, the similarities between LDS temples and Masonic lodges are such that the controversial movie "The God-makers" filmed its temple scenes in a Masonic lodge (Ed Decker and Caryl Matrisiana 1993: 76).

3.8 Concluding Remarks

The LDS consider the temple to be "the ritual centre of the universe..." (Hugh W. Nibley, 1992: 1459). In ancient Israel, people gathered together to make covenants with God, and they were instructed to make a permanent temple to God in Jerusalem. The LDS believe that, in the modern world, the temple is as important to the act of worship as it was in the ancient Judaic world, and by performing sacred ordinances in these temples, they continue to fulfil the covenant with God necessary for the salvation of their families. It represents the accumulation of their doctrine and their quest for salvation. The temple is more than just a link to God and the sacred world, it is also a link to eternity.

---

[24] Some of these elements, such as the penalty oaths, have also been modified in the endowment rites of more recent years.

Chapter 4
Life Before Birth

4.1 Introduction

One of the more unusual aspects of LDS theology concerns the belief in a pre-mortal existence, usually referred to as the 'pre-existence.' Before people were born here on earth with physical bodies, people were born into spirit bodies to God, the Father, in the pre-existence. Thus, our souls at one time existed as God's spiritual children in heaven and God is quite literally the Father of all of humanity.[25] The standard Christian doctrine of creation is denied as the LDS believe that the world is ultimately incapable of having been created (Sterling McMurrin 1979: 12). Essentially there is no beginning or end to the soul, and the foundation of the human spirit exists within itself (McMurrin 1979: 29).

Much of the LDS understanding of the pre-existence is drawn from their scripture The Pearl of Great Price. The LDS trace the origins of this scripture to a purchase of ancient papyri by Joseph Smith in 1835. Through divine revelation, Smith was able to translate the Egyptian hieroglyphics and uncovered what the LDS believe to be the writings of Abraham. This book of Abraham introduces many of the doctrines unique to the LDS church including this belief in a pre-existence and its beliefs regarding creation. Another powerfully influential source of LDS doctrine in this area is drawn from the 'King Follett Discourse,' an eulogy that Smith gave on April 7, 1844 (just weeks before his death) for a LDS friend by the name of King Follett. This sermon is an extremely effective and comprehensive summation of several doctrinal points from the scriptures.

Christian theology has traditionally situated the beginning of life with the creation of the world--a creation that was *ex nihilo*, out of nothing. According to LDS theology, matter was not created, and the world was only created in so far as God organised pre-existing matter out of chaos.[26] As with the creation of the world, the LDS do not believe that God's spirit children were created out of nothing. As one informant explained, "we are begotten of Heavenly Father as spirits, before we were spirits we were intelligences. I don't know what that is, but whatever it was, it's what we are. If you took away our bodies, we're still us, right? If you took away our spirits, we're still us, we're intelligences" (Interview with 'Lehi,' August 20, 2000). The pre-existence is an area of LDS doctrine about which little has been revealed, and so it has many aspects that appear unclear or even somewhat incoherent. This concept of 'intelligences' is certainly one of those aspects that is little understood.

---

[25] Jesus Christ was the firstborn of these spirits, and Lucifer, later known as Satan, was the second born.

These 'intelligences' are eternal, with no beginning or end (see Abraham 3:21-22 in The Pearl of Great Price). Furthermore, Joseph Smith stated in his King Follett Discourse (as compiled in Ostling and Ostling 1994: 388-394) that it is only logical to presume that there was no beginning to these intelligences, for if they had to begin from somewhere then they would also have to come to an end (Ostling and Ostling 1994: 393). Joseph Smith also stated that "the mind or the intelligence which man possesses is coequal with God himself" (1994: 392). And as the intelligence and capabilities of the spirits are coequal to that of God, then it appears to be a legitimate assumption that this would mean that someday God, too, would have to come to an end. Hence, the LDS find the philosophy of a pre-existence to be far more logical than the philosophy presented by traditional Christianity.

---

[26] The Jehovah of the Old Testament is believed to have been the pre-mortal Christ, and as such, it was through Christ that God created the earth and many other worlds (see Section 4.3).

Rulon T. Burton outlines several of the key beliefs of the doctrine of pre-existence (1994: 681-682). In order for the Heavenly Father to have begotten spirit children, it is first of all necessary to believe that God is a man with a physical body, a personage literally of flesh and bone (as such, Genesis 1: 26 "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness..." is interpreted literally).

Secondly, conforming to LDS beliefs regarding the importance of the family unit, the LDS believe that God must be married; and thus, there is a Heavenly Mother. Not much is known about the Heavenly Mother, and the only absolute knowledge that the LDS have of Her is the knowledge that She does in fact exist because it would not make any sense for there not to be a Heavenly Mother. This existence was affirmed by President Joseph F. Smith (nephew of the prophet Joseph Smith) early in the twentieth century. A few participants in this field study commented that it was their personal belief that the reason why the Mother is not well known and spoken of is to spare Her from blasphemy. Because the name of God is so abused, God has not revealed Her name as He does not want the Heavenly Mother to be put in that position. This belief in a Heavenly Mother is proclaimed openly in the popular hymn 'O My Father' by Eliza R. Snow, written in 1843, where it is stated:

> In the heavens are parents single? No; the thought makes reason
> stare! Truth is reason, truth eternal, Tells me I've a Mother there.
>
> When I leave this frail existence, When I lay this mortal by, Father,
> Mother, may I meet you in your royal courts on high?
>
> Then at length, when I've completed all you sent me forth to do,
> With your mutual approbation, let me come and dwell with you.

The Mother is not worshipped per se, but the belief in and sacred regard for Her existence is an intriguing aspect of LDS life.

Thirdly, remaining consistent with the belief that God is a man with a physical body, the LDS reject the standard Trinitarian belief in God, and instead have introduced the concept of a tritheistic God, otherwise known as 'the Godhead.' That is, God and Christ are separate physical personages, and the Holy Spirit (or Holy Ghost) is an individual spirit personage. As related in the Doctrines and Covenants (130: 22), the Holy Spirit cannot be a physical personage because it would then be impossible for the Holy Spirit to reside within us. These three beings may all be physically separate from one another but they are united in purpose and "they are united as one in the attributes of perfection" (McConkie 1979: 319). Furthermore, as literal personages, God and Christ can only be in one place at a time, but they each have such power that their influence is present everywhere at all times (McConkie 1979: 319).

The LDS are not unusual for their beliefs in a Holy family that is real and tangible, nor are they unique for perceiving the Holy family as an extension of people's mortal families. Niels Mulder's work on Filipino society (1996: 57-69) suggests some parallels between Filipino Catholicism and the LDS beliefs in an intimate familial relationship with the Holy family.

Both the LDS and Filipino Catholics believe that supernatural elements have a real and profound influence on their lives, and that miracles are a part of everyday life. They differ, however, in that the Filipinos assign the role of divine mother to Mary, while the LDS believe in the existence of a mother goddess who, like God, is essentially a parent to all of humanity. Ultimately, though, because both groups believe that the divine family shares a close relationship with humanity, their "religion idealises, legitimises and sanctifies familiar relationships with kin and other intimates" (Niels Mulder 1996: 69). The family unit then becomes the most important unit within society.

If God is a man of flesh and blood, like any other human being, then this doctrine conflicts with the common Christian belief of the virginal conception of Christ--that is, the belief that Mary conceived Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit without any need for sexual relations. The issue of how Jesus Christ, the only physical child of God, was conceived does not appear to be an issue of particular concern in LDS theology, but I believe that it is an important issue. The LDS believe that Jesus is indeed the son of God in the same way as any man is the son of a mortal father (McConkie 1979: 547, 742). This position would imply, then, that Christ was conceived in the normal biological way, a product of sexual intercourse between God and Mary, which in itself raises some interesting questions that the literature does not address.

The obvious problem would be the moral conflict involved in the idea of an intimate relationship between God and Mary. With the LDS moral views regarding the family unit, they must have been married, which in itself would lead one to assume that God must have multiple wives since He is already married to the Heavenly Mother. After all, it is just not fathomable to imagine that God could have possibly broken His marital vows to the Heavenly Mother. This issue in turn also provides a sense of legitimacy to a man's right to have more than one wife.

This reasoning remains unsatisfactory, however. Given that God happens to be the literal, physical father for all of humanity, it seems impossible that God could have engaged in sexual relations with Mary, His daughter. One informant explained to me that the only likely explanation is that Christ was conceived through some mystical act of artificial insemination, that through the assistance of the Holy Spirit, Mary was artificially inseminated with God's 'seminal fluid' (Interview with 'Noah,' February 24, 2001). Christ was then conceived in a physical act, but not through a sexual union. This interpretation is substantiated by a passage in the Book of Mormon where it predicted that Mary "shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost..." (Alma 7:10). Furthermore, it was suggested that Mary remained a virgin even in giving birth to Christ, which is similar to what is believed in traditional Christianity. This does not mean, however, that Mary is believed to have remained a virgin her entire life.

Another key belief in the pre-existence is the existence of spirit bodies. Before spirits were born into physical form on earth, the spirits of both humans and animals (including Christ) possessed a spirit body that their later mortal form strongly resembled. Indeed, the similarities between the two are so remarkable that the only real difference between them is the substance of which they are made. This difference of substance is taught to young children as 'the hand and the glove,'--that is, the glove represents the exterior physical body that can be given or taken away, while the hand is the spirit, which can exist with or without the glove.

4.2 Eternal Progression

One of the fundamental underlying themes of LDS doctrine is their concept of 'eternal progression.' This concept governs all of their actions and affects their beliefs in all aspects of life, from the pre-existence to the afterlife. Eternal life is never static, not even in the afterlife. At any given point in time, it is believed that a person is either progressing or regressing. The ultimate achievement of this progression through eternity is exaltation, the belief that we all have the ability to progress into a state of deification. As God is an exalted man, He has given us all the intelligence and the wisdom that we need so that we can become a god as He is, if we choose to do so.

This belief that everyone may progress to become gods, however, does not entail that we will ever be at the same level of progression as God. This is because "a God who progresses is a God who changes, and a God who progresses must be more powerful today than he was yesterday" (Ostling and Ostling 1999: 300). As God began to progress so much earlier than His children, it would be impossible for His children to obtain an equal state of progression.

A God who possesses the ability to progress presents some theological quandaries. If God is capable of becoming stronger and more powerful, then this of course means that God was at one time less powerful than He is now and will be even more powerful later on. If God has the ability to progress, then God is partially finite. At one time, He must have had limitations, and must in some way continue to have limitations if He can continue to become more powerful. As such, a theological quandary becomes evident as the LDS believe that God is omniscient (He is aware of all things), omnipotent (He is all-mighty and has complete authority over everything), and omnipresent (through the presence of the Holy Spirit, God has the ability to be present with us and all things, all the time) as stated in Burton's We Believe (1994: 309). In other words, in some respects God is able to progress and become more powerful, and yet at the same time, God is also believed to be all-mighty. An LDS approach aimed to reconcile this inconsistency requires one to consider that God is all-mighty and all-knowing within our mortal sphere, and that His progression is on a sphere apart from us in a way that has no affect on His role within our sphere (see Ostling and Ostling 1999: 298 - 305).

The relationship between God and the concepts of time and space is understood by the LDS in a very different way from what is found in traditional Christianity. According to the traditional Christian interpretation, God is immaterial and outside of the timeline of past, present and future; thus, God is capable of being everywhere at all times. In LDS theology, because God has a body, He is subject to time and space. God is then part of sequential time and can only be at one place at a time, but because of His divine presence, He has the power to anticipate the future, and through the Holy Spirit, His influence is felt everywhere. His presence is in a sphere where we cannot go as mortals, but it is in that sphere that He resides and is able to progress while maintaining a watchful and all-knowing eye on our activities within this sphere.

A fundamental concept in the doctrine of eternal progression is the concept of 'free agency,' the opportunity to make one's own decisions and accept the consequences of those decisions. A quintessential problem of Christianity has been the explanation of evil. With the concept of free agency, there is a very clear sense of moral obligation and an individual responsibility not to succumb to evil, or to avoid the choices that would hinder one's progression. Indeed, the LDS belief in free agency and a creation that involved organisation of existing matter rather than *ex nihilo* creation resolves this quintessential problem by "assigning the responsibility for moral evil to the freedom of will possessed as an essential property by the uncreated and underived spirits that are a 'given' in the original structure of the universe" (McMurrin 1959: 15).

This concept of free agency allows people to make their decisions based on faith; that is, one obeys God's laws and teachings because one wishes to do so, not because one is forced to follow the will of God. By making the right decisions, one is willingly progressing and coming that little bit closer to exaltation. As such, whether or not a person obtains exaltation is largely a matter of individual responsibility as one is accountable for every action, and ultimately a person is responsible for his or her own destiny.

While many LDS feel spiritually liberated because of their faith in free agency, its assignment of individual accountability is also a large responsibility that creates stress. As one person stated, "free agency is everything, although at times when I'm not doing everything that I want to be doing, I wish someone would take it away from me. Don't let me make any mistakes" (Interview with

'Betty,' August 8, 2000). Another interviewee related the gift of free agency to her relationship with her own children. While she would do anything for her children, she has to let them make their own choices. She might suspect what they might do, but ultimately she has "no control... the only control I have over their choices is by teaching them.... And that's the way that God does with us" (Interview with 'Anastasia,' August 7, 2000). God allows His children to progress by teaching them what they should do but allowing them to make their own decisions.

A controversial issue in the doctrine of the pre-existence and free agency is the LDS belief that race and nationality are directly connected to the life led in the pre-existence. While it has not been unusual for Christianity to link race and sin together as being the mark of Cain, the LDS see it as decidedly more complex. Their beliefs regarding race have been widely contested both in and out of the LDS church, but it is still a belief boldly stated in some of the classical LDS works. For example, Bruce McConkie, author of the highly influential book Mormon Doctrine, wrote that the spirits "deemed worthy to receive mortal bodies were foreordained to pass through this earthly probation in the particular race and nation suited to their needs, circumstances, and talents" (1979: 616). This implication that there were certain spirits unworthy of mortal bodies refers simply to Satan and his followers who were cast out of heaven. Because they were denied mortality, they were denied forever the gift of eternal progression. Because they never received physical bodies of their own, it is believed that they are jealous of those who do, and that is why Satan and his followers seek endlessly to corrupt people.

The spirits that demonstrated great faithfulness and righteousness in the pre-mortal world, however, were foreordained to have a more privileged or special existence on earth, as in the case of the people of Israel. Additionally, it is also believed that outstanding spirits were destined to become prophets and apostles (Abraham 3: 23).[27]

The issue of race has been a source of concern in the contemporary church. The church has taken steps over the last couple of decades to integrate the races in a more unified Christian fellowship, such as the decision in 1979, based on divine revelation, to permit those of African heritage to be ordained into the Melchizedek priesthood. Despite these steps, the legacy of racial segregation has hardly dissipated, and many LDS continue to believe that the colour of one's skin is somehow linked to the pre-mortal world (see Ostling and Ostling 1999: 94-106).

Interestingly enough, however, while it may be believed that the colour of one's skin may be linked to a pre-mortal existence, it is not believed that physical disabilities in this life are in any way to be perceived as a result of non-righteous behaviour in the pre-existence (Burton 1994: 681).[28] In fact, it is even proclaimed that those who are faced with the extra challenges and hardships brought on by physical and mental disabilities will be regarded with special favour in the afterlife.

Just like young children, the severely disabled will receive celestial glory automatically, without ever needing baptism. There is also a popular belief among the LDS that the pre-mortal spirits of the disabled were quite righteous, and that their disabilities during mortality exist as a test for others. Their spirits were righteous enough that they did not really need mortality as a test of faith, and their disabilities serve as a challenge for those around them responsible for their care (Interview with 'Noah,' February 24, 2001). They will further be rewarded in the hereafter for any suffering that they experience during this life.

---

[27] For these decisions to have been made, it was necessary for God to know each of His spirit children individually. Because of this intimate relationship, God was also able to foreordain certain missions that each person was to accomplish during mortality.

[28] This is substantiated in John 9: 1-3 where Jesus was confronted by His disciples on this issue. Upon encountering a blind man, the disciples asked of Him if the disability was the blame of the person or the parents. Jesus in turn replied, "neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

While the LDS beliefs in eternal progression, exaltation, and the plurality of gods are quite controversial, the idea that God could be as we are now and progress to what He is now, is something that many LDS identify with and use as a source of motivation to live a better life. There is no concrete reconciliation of theological inconsistencies within the LDS faith, a difficult task with any religion, but it appears to be a concern only to a minority of the LDS people. Theological inconsistencies are not pursued too intensely by the lay person, as there is a general attitude that at this time human knowledge is incomplete and until more knowledge is revealed, it is necessary to rely on faith. Thus, theological inconsistencies are regarded by many not as flaws in the doctrine, but rather as evidence of incomplete knowledge and misunderstandings of faith. As one person commented, "my job is to just move forward and be the best I can be" (Interview with 'Betty,' August 8, 2000).

4.3 The Grand Council

As a result of the free agency discussed in the previous section, the spirit children in heaven were capable of choosing a mortal existence. This decision was reached at a 'Grand Council' in heaven where all the spirits gathered together to be with their Heavenly Father. Upon gathering, they saw His physical body and compared it to their own spirit bodies, and there was a strong desire to have bodies like Him. At this council, God offered the spirits their own chance of obtaining physical bodies by presenting a plan, and it was the first two of His sons, Jesus and Lucifer, who volunteered to be the atoning sacrifice. With free agency, people would always have the opportunity to choose between right and wrong, and as it could be expected that people would sometimes make the wrong decisions, God would also provide the opportunity to repent. The life of one of His children as an atoning sacrifice was necessary for this repentance to occur.

It was this 'plan of salvation' that offered the opportunity to progress through the opportunity of mortality. Each spirit would be born into mortality by passing through a veil, a veil that would blanket the memories of life in heaven,[29] so everyone would be truly tested on their faith. Since this veil blankets knowledge of the plan, it is up to faith alone for a spirit to decide whether or not to commit to the plan. As part of this test of faith, the spirits would possess a body full of human frailties and vulnerable to temptation (unlike the perfect, exalted body of God). If there was no veil of forgetfulness, then the gift of free agency would be irrelevant as everyone would possess the knowledge of the plan at birth and there would be no real testing of faith during mortality.

This mortal existence with all of its tests and challenges then offers what one person referred to as a "super-accelerated growth process" (Interview with 'Francis,' August 14, 2000).[30] Even though God tests His people during all three phases of existence, it is during mortality that people are faced with their biggest challenges as they have mortal bodies and no knowledge of the plan; thus, it is also during mortality that people will have the most opportunity to grow and progress.

The LDS beliefs regarding the atonement are not to be dismissed as being an issue of little consequence, because the LDS believe that it is this act that is at the root of every human action. Through the grace of God, each person has the opportunity of immortal life, but through faith and deeds of righteousness, some will have the opportunity of eternal life. It is only through this gift of eternal life that one will be raised to one of the three degrees of glory (see Section 6.5). This opportunity of life after death has only been made possible through the crucifixion of Christ as the atonement for the sins of humanity. This atonement is considered to be infinite and eternal, as it is applicable to all people, through the ages, on earth and beyond.

---

[29] With no memories of the pre-existence, every spirit is born as a tabula rasa, and is thus completely innocent. Because infants are innocent of sin and are not responsible for their actions, the LDS refrain from baptism until children reach what they consider to be the 'age of accountability,' which is the age of eight.

[30] This decision to accept or reject the plan as presented at the Grand Council was the first of three challenges or tests necessary for the exaltation promised in the plan of salvation. The second test involves proving one's worthiness of that body during mortal life, and the third test occurs at the time of the judgement.

The LDS believe that God is a creator of "worlds without number" (Moses 1:33) that are like our own and there are even more that will be created. After His death and resurrection, Jesus visited all of these other planets to preach the gospel. That there were many other planets of course raises the curious question as to why Jesus was sent here to earth, and this is answered in different places in LDS scripture (Moses 7: 36 and 2 Nephi 10:3). Christ was chosen to be born here on earth as the atoning sacrifice because earth is the most wicked of all the planets, and indeed it was only among the Jews that there were a people "wicked' enough to crucify their Lord (2 Nephi 10:3).

Not just any man could sacrifice himself for such a cause, however, as it was only a man born of God's flesh, possessing some of His father's immortality, that had the capacity for such a mission. And so it was at this Grand Council that Jesus, before He was even born on this earth, offered His life to be sacrificed for the good of God's children, that they might all be resurrected and return to the presence of their Heavenly Father. Through this atonement, glory would be bestowed upon God for His gift to His children.

God's second born son Lucifer also volunteered to be the atoning sacrifice, but he wanted to modify the plan. Lucifer wanted an easier way, and attempted to deny people their freedom of choice so that people could not help but obey. As such, the people would not really be tested on faith and Lucifer would assign himself glory for all the souls that would be resurrected. When God choose Jesus over Lucifer to be the Saviour, Lucifer was extremely resentful, and the LDS refer to what happened next as the 'war in heaven.' Lucifer rebelled against God, attempted to take control, and as punishment for this rebellion, he was exiled from heaven along with his followers, about one third of the spirits in heaven.

4.4 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has discussed the fundamental LDS beliefs regarding a pre-existence, and a tritheistic God. Even in the previous life, spirits were able to think for themselves and make qualified judgements. The most important of these judgements was the decision to have mortal life. During the course of the next chapter, therefore, it will be critical to keep in mind that the LDS believe that every person is here because he or she chose to be, and that his or her pre-mortal spirit was fully informed of the challenges that lay ahead. To make sure that the spirits did fully understand the consequences of their choice, there were even a number of councils held to instruct the spirits about what would happen (Burton 1994: 681). The spirits were willing to face these challenges as part of the plan, the process of achieving exaltation through progression.[31]

Spirits are born into mortality only after the spirits progressed as much as they could while in spirit form, an individual progression dependent on their own diligence. It is even a popular LDS belief that the spirits are being born smarter and smarter, and that the new generations are more intelligent at birth than any have been before (Interview with 'Caleb,' August 9, 2000). This belief appears logical to the LDS as the spirits born today have had much more time in heaven to progress than say the spirits born a thousand years ago. These spirits are born into this world as adult spirits[32] placed in the bodies of infants. Even though these spirits are in adult form, they possess no memory of their previous existence since they have to pass through the veil, as discussed earlier in this chapter. While the memories may be shrouded by the veil, personalities and individual traits developed in the spirit world are carried with the person into their mortal existence.

---

[31] Spirits who did not choose to undertake mortality remained in heaven as angels (Interview with 'Caleb,' August 9, 2000).

The philosophy of a pre-existence is a significant distinguishing factor between the LDS church and the other denominations of Christianity. It is a philosophy that has often been opposed and criticised by outsiders, but within the small LDS community that I studied, it is a perfectly logical and sound explanation for many of life's mysteries. The idea of not having a previous existence and the concept that life would only begin at the biological moment of conception is considered to be illogical and even preposterous. As one person in my study commented, "I guess because I was raised with it, and understood it, the concept of not understanding where we came from is more baffling to me..." (Interview with 'Betty,' August 8, 2000).

---

[32] This term 'adult' in this context is debated within the LDS community as it can be somewhat misleading. While some advocate its usage, others caution that the word 'adult' may imply age or maturity when it should properly be interpreted more as a state of knowledge and progression.

Chapter 5
Mortality As a Test of Faith

5.1 A Way of Life

While the pre-mortal existence may be seen in part as preparation for mortality, the mortal existence is ultimately seen as preparation for deification in the post-mortal existence. The LDS believe that they are a chosen people. They alone have maintained their covenants with God, and they alone have a privileged relationship with God that is demonstrated through the existence of living prophets and divine revelations within the LDS church. In order to maintain their covenants with God, the LDS have to exercise a very strong sense of commitment, and their faith literally becomes a way of life. Their faith is not something to be practised only on Sundays, but rather, as many people in my study commented, it is something that is an 'everyday religion,' a faith that must be lived everyday.

The LDS religion becomes a way of life through the commitment to living righteously. Aspects of this righteousness were discussed in chapter three, and these included obeying the Word of Wisdom and demonstrating acts of morality and individual accountability. These stipulations also include the necessity of practising chastity before marriage, practising fidelity within marriage, obeying the church and its teachings, and partaking in charitable acts. The LDS are also prohibited from participating in such acts as gambling and pornography.

This commitment to righteousness is considered to be a true testimony of one's dedication to God and Christ, and one's commitment to fulfilling his or her covenants. There are a number of these covenants for the LDS to fulfil. They must accept the gospel of Christ as a covenant between God and His people, and they must enter the covenant of baptism (as performed in the LDS church) to show their acceptance of His gospel. As adults, the LDS are to fulfil the 'law of consecration' in which they promise to dedicate whatever it takes of their own personal finances, time, effort and skills to continue building the kingdom of God here on earth. Adult men enter a covenant with God when they become holders of the Melchizedek priesthood and pledge an oath of obedience and service. When a couple marries in the temple and becomes sealed for all of eternity, they also enter into a covenant with God. In addition, each LDS is required to set aside Sunday as the day of Sabbath in order to acknowledge and reflect upon the covenants that they have made (Burton 1994: 142).

The LDS proclaim that their way of life is really quite simple and free from so many of the complexities and anxieties that trouble those who live differently. An examination of the LDS way of life, however, shows that not all communities are faced with the same challenges and opportunities. Any person following all of the LDS guidelines is faced with many outside pressures when living among non-LDS. Since the community that I studied was predominantly LDS, the way of life practised by the community was practically inextricable from the life led by the members of the church. One participant in my study commented that "people who have lived here all their lives and who are members of the church here cannot, in their minds, separate the community from the church because it is so intertwined ..." (Interview with 'Connor,' August 9, 2000). Because of this intimacy, the predominantly LDS communities are in some ways distinct from the LDS communities that reside within larger non-LDS cities.

In the predominantly LDS areas, it is much easier to follow the LDS way of life as people are able to develop a certain layer of insulation from the outside world and the extra challenges that it offers. Hence, the people who I studied may have differing interpretations of what it is like to practise the LDS way of life from those who are more integrated with the secular world, even though the underlying teachings and doctrines are the same. This point was substantiated by several of my informants who discussed places in which they had lived previously. All of these informants believed that the way of life offered in a small LDS community was ideal for raising their children.

An additional issue in analysing the relationship between the LDS and the wider society is that the church stresses in its teachings that the LDS should 'be in the world, but not of the world.' Their twelfth article of faith[33] demonstrates the official church position that its members support their country and government. It simply reads: "We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers and magistrates, in obeying, honouring and sustaining the law."

This relationship between the LDS and society is challenging in its dualism as it requires the people to integrate themselves fully into society and modern culture, and at the same time, reject many of the attitudes and behaviours that modern culture promotes. In other words, the LDS are encouraged to participate actively in the world through such means as voting, running for political office, paying taxes, voluntary enlistment in national armed forces, charity works, and making friends with people who are not of the faith. At the same time, however, the LDS are discouraged from seeking riches and desiring the material items that are popular in society. A young woman can dress fashionably, so long as those fashions reflect her modesty and not vanity.

This apparent dualism is a form of compromise that is different from what is found in some of the other Christian denominations that establish a strict distinction between righteous behaviour and the values of the contemporary world. For example, southern Alberta is inhabited by both LDS and Hutterite communities. In fact, there are several Hutterite colonies near the community where I conducted my study. The two reflect a similar history of persecution, hard work and dedication to God, but the Hutterites have chosen to remove themselves from society and accept a marginalized position. Although their refusal to participate in society has left them rather isolated, the Hutterites have chosen this as an attempt to protect themselves from the corrupting influences of the outside world.

---

[33] The LDS 'Articles of Faith' are thirteen statements, composed by Joseph Smith, that form a basic summary of some of the church doctrines. They are considered to be scripture and are published with The Pearl of Great Price.

The LDS do not believe that this sort of marginalization is beneficial in fulfilling God's work. Instead, they believe that an essential component of righteousness is in a sense being part of contemporary culture (Interview with 'Francis,' August 14, 2000). By keeping one's self open to community, one can share aspects of one's life and of God's plan with others. While a LDS practitioner is not expected to proselytise to non-LDS friends or co-workers, it is hoped that by sharing aspects of his or her life, others might be drawn into accepting it into their lives or at least increase a sense of awareness of alternative ways of living.

Regardless of where an LDS practitioner lives, the LDS person has to develop a personal sense of 'testimony' and testify that his or her belief system is true. One receives a testimony through a 'spiritual witness,' which is essentially a reception of the Holy Spirit (see Glossary). It is quite rare for a person to be visited by an actual personage (such as Joseph Smith was when visited by the angel Moroni)[34] or voice, and usually spiritual messages are transmitted though an impression of warmth or tingling.

---

[34] Although rare, it is conceivable that a personage, or messenger from God, might appear to someone. In case this occurs, the LDS are taught to distinguish between an authentic heavenly personage and a personage sent by Satan. If one sees a personage, one should then extend a hand out to the personage. If the personage takes the hand of the person, and the person feels nothing, than that personage was sent by Satan. One of God's messengers would withhold his hand and proceed directly to the message.

In order for people to experience a spiritual witness, it is necessary for a person to learn what it is. In fact, the missionaries are instructed on how to explain to their pupils (or 'investigators' as they are called) the nuances of the spiritual witness in order to help them become more attuned to it. By teaching them to be aware of the spirit, the pupils should come to the knowledge of the truth of what is being taught to them, and subsequently decide to convert. Additionally, some people are believed to possess more 'believing spirits,' and are therefore born with gifts of faith that allow them to be more sensitive than most to receiving and comprehending the spirit (Interview with 'Aida,' August 7, 2000).

There are four things that need to be believed in order to have a testimony, and these form the foundation of the LDS belief system (Interview with 'Connor,' August 9, 2000). The first is the knowledge and acceptance that Jesus is the Christ and Saviour, that Jesus is the head of the church, and that His Gospel is the only true gospel. The second is the acceptance that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God and that the Book of Mormon is true. Third is the belief that there is only one true church of Jesus Christ, and that this is the LDS church. Fourth is the belief that the heavens are not closed and that there are prophets today who continue to receive inspiration and divine revelations.

Even though individuals may personally communicate with God and be privy to receiving the Holy Spirit, only the prophet has the power to change doctrine. This belief in living prophets and divine revelation is a firm conviction of the church and one that the people invest a significant amount of pride in. The continuation of divine revelation is proof to them that they are a special people and that they are indeed following the true righteous path to salvation. The LDS find great comfort in the knowledge that the heavens are not closed, and that God continues to impart directions and wisdom to a living prophet here on earth, a man who also happens to lead their church. What God reveals to the prophet is then shared among the people and is to be followed as if the words had come directly from the mouth of God (Burton 1994: 750). Therefore, the LDS follow their way of life because they have been told by a prophet of this lifetime that these ways are necessary for their salvation. This direction is more meaningful to them than the exclusive obedience to the words of prophets from more than two thousand years ago.

The LDS believe that when one is not fully attuned with the teachings of the prophets and is living in such a way that distances one from God, then the spirit within seems to fade away. Having that sense of spirit is essential to being righteous so that a person can feel that intimate relationship with one's Heavenly Father. Sensing the spirit appears almost to be the constant reminder that the LDS need in order to stay focused on the ultimate goal of deification and exaltation. Interestingly enough, one person even informed me that his understanding of eternal life is that it is something that every person has so long as the person is in touch with the spirit. Through the spirit you are in touch with God, and as long as He is with you, then you have a taste of what eternity really means.

For those who do not follow the behavioural and moral stipulations provided by LDS doctrine, there exists a condition known as 'spiritual death.' Spiritual death is the condition of misery that exists when one is spiritually distant from God. While it is believed that to some extent even the most devout will suffer from this condition through the mere process of being born, it is also understood that this state is experienced by all people who have passed the age of accountability. This spiritual distance from God varies according to the level of one's repentance and acceptance of Christ (Richard M. Romney 1992: 1407). Thus, those people who completely reject the doctrine will exist in a perpetually miserable and suffering state.

In attempting to live the best one can, an LDS person searches for signs throughout his or her life to verify that he or she is fulfilling the mission that he or she was sent to accomplish here on earth. Sometimes these signs may be cast through a patriarchal blessing. Patriarchs are Melchizedek priesthood holders who have been called by the church to serve as a 'patriarch' within a stake and bestow these blessings on the members within the region. God will reveal through the Holy Spirit to the patriarch what He wants the person to know. A patriarchal blessing is usually bestowed only on people who are at least twelve, for they must be old enough to understand the seriousness and sacredness of its message. Additionally, one blessing is usually all that is necessary to guide a person's entire life. The blessing contains prophecies of what is to come in the life of the person blessed, and the person thus receives information on his or her mission, and how he or she is to best serve God. The blessing is not, however, a guarantee of what is to come, for the person must live a righteous life in order to obtain the blessings. But if something does not come to fruition during that person's life, and he or she lived a worthy life, it is believed that the patriarch had been able to see beyond the veil, and was thus able to reflect upon what will happen in another stage of life (Burton 1994: 622).

It is expected that, with the exception of Christ, no one could lead a perfect life.[35] People are prone to making mistakes and that is why God has provided the atonement. Although Satan does not have the power to open the door to temptation himself, due to human frailties, people are always vulnerable. The LDS firmly believe that according to this atoning sacrifice, if one repents of one's sins, then God will forgive and forget. But if a person keeps repeating the sin, then one is not totally repentant and forgiveness is harder to come by. Repentance and forgiveness are also somewhat variable depending on what the deed was. The example related to me several times to illuminate this variation was that if a person steals something, the repentant person can always give it back, but if a person commits murder, the life can never be brought back and is to be judged accordingly.

---

[35] Even though it is possible, it is doubtful that any one at present would be so righteous and near perfect to be translated (see Section 5.2).

5.2 Translation

As discussed in the previous chapter, the concept of progression is essential to the LDS understanding of life and this chapter has so far discussed its corresponding effect on their lifestyle during mortality. Their Heavenly Father has a master plan, a plan of salvation, and it is this plan that the LDS must follow in order to progress and go on to receive its rewards. For the people who have led remarkably near perfect righteous lives, God has given them the special gift of 'translation.' Translation means that these people have been instantly changed from mortal to immortal without going through the process of death, and this process is verified by scripture. The Bible contains the story of Enoch (Genesis 5: 18-24 and Hebrews 11:5), and the LDS scripture The Pearl of Great Price discusses further the story of the city of Enoch (Moses 6 and 7). Because they had achieved everything that they had needed to achieve in their life's missions, all of its people were instantly translated off the face of the earth and received their paradisiacal glory (see Section 6.5). Moses, Elijah and other prophets were also translated.

Because of translation, these people were fortunate to be able to proceed to the next stage of life without ever having to go through the pain and suffering involved with death. These people were taken bodily into heaven to serve God with their bodies of flesh and bone until the time of Christ's resurrection and His gift of the atoning sacrifice. At this point they underwent changes in their bodies and they too received their immortal glory. Even though translated beings do not 'die' as we know it, this does not mean that translated beings never experience death, albeit death of a different kind. Although the translated beings will never experience the pain and suffering of death that we are familiar with, the translated being must still pass from a state of mortality to one of immortality. It is through this passage that the translated individual essentially dies and is subsequently reborn as immortal.

There is another example of translation that happens to be a vibrant part of LDS folklore and this is the story of the three Nephites (3Nephi 28:1-18). The Nephites were descendants of Lehi, who left Israel in 600 B.C. and settled in the Americas. His descendants eventually divided into two groups of people, the Nephites who were lighter-skinned and quite righteous, and the Laminites, who were rebellious to the ways of God and whose skins were darkened by God to represent this unbelief.[36] After Christ's resurrection, He appeared in the Americas among the Nephites and chose twelve disciples.[37] Knowing the deepest desires of three of these disciples, He changed their bodies from a mortal state to an immortal one while they remained on earth. With this change, Satan could no longer have any influence on them, and they remained to continue Christ's ministry.

The LDS believe that to this day the three Nephites remain to assist those that need it, and they will continue to do so until the second coming of Christ. William A. Wilson has also shown that southern Alberta participates in this aspect of LDS folklore with its own stories of how local people have been aided by these mysterious disciples (1990: 159-160). For example, the three Nephites have appeared to local Albertans to rescue people trapped in blizzards and they have also come to heal the sick.

---

[36] This story of the darkening of the skin is somewhat reminiscent of the biblical tale of the Hamites as told in Genesis (9: 20-27)

[37] The Book of Mormon details the events between the Nephites and Laminites as recorded by the Nephites, for several centuries, until the Laminites massacred them. God allowed the destruction of the Nephites to happen because they who had once been so righteous had become corrupt and lost. The LDS believe that the Laminites were the ancestors of the indigenous peoples of the Americas.

While translation continues to be an important aspect of their theology, LDS beliefs in translation were much more fervent in the early church. In its early years, many members believed that their entire community, their Zion, would be translated into heaven (Dan Vogel 1988: 195-198). As the years went by and it became apparent that the second coming of Christ was perhaps not as imminent as was originally thought, the fervour over translation gradually decreased.

5.3 The Family: Eternal Implications

Converts are primarily attracted to the LDS church because of the emphasis that the church places on family. This emphasis is evident in an abundance of materials that the church publishes on family issues, which are directed at both members and non-members. These materials include pamphlets, movies, brochures, magazine articles and museum exhibits at the Church Museum of Art and History. They even designate one evening per week (Monday) to be spent with the family as 'family home evening.' In contemporary society, where there seems to be so many different ways to create divisions within the family unit,[38] the family-oriented LDS church is appealing to many. For the average LDS person, his or her family unit is central to life, and outside of one's personal covenant with God, nothing is more important than establishing a covenant with a spouse and children.

---

[38] The weakening ties of the family within contemporary society are understood by the LDS to be evidence of Satan and his desire to prevent humanity's progression into exaltation. This is fuelled by Satan's resentment for having been denied the opportunity of mortality and progression.

As discussed in chapter three, the sealing rites performed in the temple unite a family together for all of eternity. Because of this emphasis placed on becoming part of an eternal family unit, the LDS are taught from a young age about their responsibilities and obligations for finding the right marital partner. In its introductory paragraph of the student manual, Achieving a Celestial Marriage, which is aimed at college age students, the church reminds its youth that:

> Our Heavenly Father and mother live in an exalted state because they achieved a celestial marriage. As we achieve a like marriage we shall become as they are and begin the creation of worlds for our own spirit children (LDS Church 1992:1).

As such, LDS youth are taught that if they wish to obtain exaltation, the ultimate goal of their eternal progression, they must be married to a fellow LDS member and be sealed in the temple.

God Himself could never have achieved His own divinity if He had not been married. God's primary purpose of giving eternal life to man would not have been possible if man did not have children. God has commanded that His people have children and the more children that people have, the more spirits are born, and the closer we are to the second coming of Christ. Christ will not come again until the spirits in heaven are almost all born.

Thus, people have a moral obligation to have as many children as possible, and parents should seek counsel from God as to when to stop having more children.[39] Essentially, then, "procreation is at the centre of one of Mormonism's key dimensions of religious identity and at the height of its concept of spiritual progression" (Steven L. Olsen 1998: 18).

---

[39] Because spirit children are destined to be born to certain families, it would be wrong to finish one's family while there is still a spirit in heaven destined to become part of this family.

On the other hand, procreating without the sanctity of marriage will only hinder one's progression. Because the act of having children is so sacred, it is very much a sin to partake in sexual relations that have not been sanctified through the marital rites. Sanctified sexuality is even considered to be "one of a few specific acts by which humans most closely approximate the creative role and power of God" (Olsen 1998: 17-18). The LDS have found evidence in their scriptures that demonstrate God's conviction that pre-marital relations are wrong, and that in fact it is a sin so great that it is almost of the same magnitude as murder.

As shown in Achieving a Celestial Marriage (LDS church 1992: 58), the LDS use a tree to symbolise the eternal family unit. This is derived from the scriptural reference of Malachi 4:1. This symbol shows that it is impossible for one part of the tree to grow without all of the parts working together. The roots of the tree represent the ancestors of an individual, those that are still living and those ancestors that are sealed to the individual through the baptisms for the dead. The trunk of the tree represents the righteous individual. The branches represent the individual's children who have been sealed together as a family. An individual who is not part of a family unit; that is, one who has no spouse or children, is considered to be a broken branch. Because the stick is not connected to either a root or branch, the stick is ultimately empty of life.

To become a god, one must behave like one right now. By obtaining exaltation, a husband and wife will have the same capability to beget spirit children as the Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother do now. This capability is known as 'eternal increase.' The LDS then consider that the marriage between a mortal man and woman is "a laboratory for godhood" (LDS church 1992: 65). All of the responsibilities and duties that are valid here are reflections of what a celestial marriage is like between heavenly parents.

While a husband and wife are considered to be equal partners in marriage, traditional gender roles prevail. The LDS church promotes the practice of patriarchal order as being part of the natural existence of law and order. It has nothing to do with who is more intelligent and who is the more righteous. Rather, the LDS consider it to be simply a matter of role division as it has been commanded by God. The husband is the head of the household, and is the final presiding authority over any issue that affects the household. Because the husband is also the priesthood holder in the home, the wife is subject to his righteous counsel (Burton 1994: 544), and it is also the priesthood holder who has the ability to bestow blessings on his family members.[40]

The wife is to be the 'helpmeet' (LDS Church 1992: 76-77), and despite all that has been taught otherwise by contemporary feminism, the LDS believe that it is not up to the woman to question her role as helper, nurturer and keeper of the home.[41] This patriarchal order is considered to have a divine purpose and those who confront it are opposing the will of God. The LDS are also quick to point out, though, that the wife is a true partner, and is not in any way inferior to her husband.

Because a husband and wife are married for all of eternity, it becomes even more important that the pair are compatible and capable of resolving their differences. Since the person who dies and goes on to the next stage of life is still the same person with all of the same likes and dislikes, any discord within a marital relationship here will be carried over into the next existence. For this reason, the church promotes educational materials regarding the achievement of marital harmony. This promotion of harmonious relationships is also applied to the extended family. In other words, if Johnny squabbles with his aunt Bessie now, he will continue to do so for all of eternity unless they can learn to resolve their differences. If relations between Johnny and aunt Bessie are tense, this conflict could affect the harmonious workings of the entire eternal family.

---

[40] Interestingly enough, according to Maureen Ursenbach Beecher (1990: 220), LDS women once had the ability to perform a washing and anointing rite for other women before the birth of a child. This would include a blessing for the safe delivery of the child, but this practice was discontinued in the early twentieth century and replaced with blessings performed by the male priesthood holders. After blessing an infant a few weeks after birth, the child is officially given a name and enters the church genealogical records. This blessing is not to be confused with baptism.

[41] Although it is not forbidden, the church strongly encourages women not to work outside of the home, and women should only do so if the family needs the extra income. In the community that I studied, many of the women did work outside of the home, or were actively involved with the running of the family farm, but the home was still the priority.

Bruce McConkie states in his Mormon Doctrine that, above all else, the most important accomplishments of an LDS are first of all, "to marry the right person in the right place, by the right authority" and secondly, "to keep the covenant made in connection with this holy and perfect order of matrimony - thus assuring the obedient persons of an inheritance of exaltation in the celestial kingdom" (1979: 118). Although there is little mention of it and no evidence for it in the scriptures, the LDS believe that Christ is married. If He is not, then their entire belief system regarding the family unit could be invalidated. As such, it is only logical for them to presume that He must be married, because to think otherwise would be incomprehensible. With these beliefs regarding the importance of the family, one can easily imagine that any single LDS person must feel rather anxious about his or her lack of marital status, and how this lack of marital status could affect his or her place in the hereafter.

5.4 Funerals

Funerary rituals are a celebration of continuity and reflection. The emphasis of the service is an expression of faith and hope on behalf of the community through reminiscences and references to the plan of salvation. Both the service and the obituary remind the congregation that mortality is only a temporary state of being and that the deceased has merely ended his or her earthly mission. In the three weeks that I spent in the community of Legacy, I had the opportunity to attend three funerals, each with underlying similarities as well as differences according to the varying ages of the deceased. One was for an elderly member of the community who had had a lengthy battle with illness. The second was an adolescent of the community who had died from injuries sustained in a car accident shortly before I arrived. The third was the death of a toddler who had been killed in a tragic farm accident.

Funerals are generally conducted at the LDS chapel or mortuary under the supervision of the ward's Bishop, and they are never conducted at the temple. The funeral includes a viewing of the body at the church in a separate room before the actual funeral service. The body is dressed in the sacred temple clothing, providing that the person had received the endowment while living. Women are dressed by members of the Relief Society (a female auxiliary organisation) and the men are dressed by fellow members of the priesthood.[42] One by one, people arrive and go through a 'receiving line' composed of immediate members of the family and offer their condolences to the family. When people finish going through this line, they go to the chapel to await the service. In the meantime, after people have stopped coming, the family members say their temporary goodbyes to the deceased, and close the casket if this has not already been done. The family then moves with the casket to the chapel to begin the service.

While the Bishop guides the funeral service, others are welcome to give eulogies as well as speeches on various theological doctrines concerning the afterlife. The services speak of the deceased person's faith and testimony, and serve as a tribute to the life of that person. The services speak of the deceased's "fortitude in the face of life's challenges ... including, often, the final cause of death" (Davis Bitton 1998: 28-29).[43] Death is depicted in the funeral sermons as a sign from God that the deceased is needed in the hereafter for some special reason, a mission. The bereaved are comforted knowing that after the resurrection they will have all of eternity to spend with their loved ones. Hymns are sung at both the beginning and the end of the funeral, and during the service, wherever the family thinks is appropriate. The hymns typically address LDS concepts of eternity and reunion with their ancestors. A hymn that was performed at each of the three funerals that I attended was entitled "Together Forever."

---

[42] There is little mention in the literature of the proper procedures for the funerals of yet unbaptised infants and young children. Most of the these decisions are made by the parents of the deceased child, although the preference would be for white clothing.

The graveside ceremony consists of a small intimate gathering of family and friends, and is directed by a member of the Melchizedek priesthood, a family member if at all possible. The service traditionally consists of a simple grave dedication. According to the Missionary Handbook (LDS church 1990: 51), this dedication has six components that must be addressed. The dedication opens with the mention of "our Heavenly Father," and the statement that this ordinance of grave dedication is performed with the authority of the Melchizedek priesthood. The priesthood holder then consecrates the burial plot and dedicates it as the deceased's place of rest. The priesthood holder then makes a request to God, asking that the site be safe from harm until the physical remains reunite with the spirit at the resurrection.[44] He then makes another request of God to comfort the family.[45] The priesthood holder then closes the dedication with the phrase "in the name of Jesus Christ." After the graveside service, family and friends gather together at the Church for a potluck dinner.

---

[43] Consequently, a funeral held for an inactive LDS member, or one who was not as faithful as is expected, could be very awkward indeed.

[44] No matter how the grave might be disturbed, however, it is believed that the body will be restored completely at the resurrection, without so much as a single hair disturbed (Alma 40:25).

5.5 Constructions of Meaning in Death

As with every culture, there is the quest to find meaning in death and a search to justify its existence. Death also raises questions about the meaning of life. The bereaved need to find meaning in the life lived by the deceased, and this quest is usually brought about in three ways (personal communication from Herbert Northcott, November 22, 2000). The first is the retrospective life review, and the second is the evaluation of the death itself, essentially whether or not the person died with dignity. The third way for people to find meaning in life is the belief in an afterlife, and the conclusions drawn from this belief have the capacity to validate the existence of life.

During my stay among the LDS, I was able to determine four of their primary explanations for the death of a person. First of all, the LDS believe that as part of the plan of salvation, each person is sent to this earth with a mission to fulfil, and at its fulfilment, the life of that person ends. Eternity consists of one phase after another, and sometimes instead of the next phase of life beginning here on earth, God calls a person back into heaven to begin an entirely different phase of eternity. God has the right to choose at any time who can stay and who is to be brought back into heaven. He is the creator and controller of the divine plan to which all mortals are subject. This does not mean, however, that miracles cannot happen to save someone, but if that mission is fulfilled and God has a purpose for that spirit, then that spirit will be called back to His Heavenly Father. But, if someone commits some thoughtless or stupid act such as abusing a narcotic substance or running into oncoming traffic, then it is not up to God to intervene. That person has made a choice regardless of whether or not it was his or her time to go.[46]

---

[45] One informant told me that it is her belief that the spirit comes to the bereaved person and provides the strength necessary to get through the immediate stages of grief (Interview with "Janice,' August 18, 2000). Hence, God is primarily able to comfort the family through the presence of the Holy Spirit. If the person does not acknowledge the Spirit, then the comfort offered by God is rejected.

The second explanation is the belief that the person was needed to fulfil a specific mission in the hereafter. For example, the young person who died during my stay was a budding artist, and it was suggested that perhaps she was needed to create some art in heaven of such magnitude that we cannot possibly imagine. Third is the belief that death usually has some positive effect for the living--bringing the family together, strengthening the faith of those who were weak, reuniting inactive family members, bringing people closer to God through the search for meaning, or as one person commented, it is a learning experience that offers a person the opportunity to learn and grow (Interview with 'Bonnie,' August 8, 2000).

The fourth is a bigger challenge, and that is the struggle to find meaning in the death of little children. Since much of a funeral service is conducted as a celebration of the deceased's life, it becomes difficult to apply to the death of a young child. It is such an obvious and disheartening contrast to think of the comparison between the life of an adult and a child, and of all that the child never accomplished in his or her short life. It becomes very difficult indeed to justify how a child could go so quickly without ever really having the opportunity to prove himself or herself. The rationalisation that has emerged is the simple explanation that all the child really needed in mortality was to get a body. These children's pre-mortal souls had obtained such a level of progression and righteousness that when they were born here, they did not have to exist for very long because they had already reached a level of progression that prepared them to go on to the next life. This rationale was frequently discussed during the funeral service for the toddler who died during my trip. Furthermore, all children who die at a young age are guaranteed exaltation and a place in the celestial kingdom.

---

[46] Such reckless actions do not change the person's burial in the LDS church. The service would be conducted in the same manner as for any other deceased.

In addition, parents are comforted by the reassurance that they will have the opportunity to raise that child later in the hereafter, although some of the details of how this occurs varied among the people I spoke to. First of all, it does not appear to be clear to the LDS whether the parents will be raising their child from the age at which he or she died, or whether the child has been immortalised in adult form and the parents take over from there. One of my informants commented that he believes that "at some point, during the resurrection, you will be resurrected at essentially the same place you were when you died. Therefore, when children die and are resurrected, they will still be children. And it's during that period that there are chances to raise that child to adulthood during the resurrection, not in the celestial kingdom" (Interview with 'Harold,' August 16, 2000).

This explanation resolves some of the varying responses that I received. If the rearing of the child took place during the resurrection, it would still allow the child to be immortalised in adult form in the celestial kingdom. Until the parents die themselves, the child resides in the spirit world where some adults have been assigned the task of watching over the children (Interview with 'Henrietta', August 16, 2000).

The salvation of children is a complex issue and becomes even more complex when we consider the children who die before or during birth. In Death and the Right Hand (1960), Robert Hertz conducted a cross-cultural study of death and mortuary ritual, particularly with respect to collective representations. One of his conclusions was that people who have not yet established themselves within the social order are considered rather insignificant at the time of their death, and this may include both the very young and strangers to the community.

This interpretation has been supported by more recent ethnographic work such as that by Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1995: 41-58) on acceptable death in Brazil. There is an extremely high infant mortality rate among the Roman Catholic community of Bom Jesus, but as strange as it may appear to an outsider, there is a general air of indifference towards child mortality. In this poverty stricken community, the lives of the very young are often sacrificed to enable the survival of the rest of the family. The death of a young child is not believed to be a time of sorrow for the soul of the baby rises to the kingdom of heaven as an angel. Crying is not only discouraged, but is actually forbidden as the tears may dampen the delicate wings of the angel-baby and hinder its rise to heaven. Typically after a death, the community needs to re-establish the social order, and this recreation of society is brought about through the performance of ritual.

In LDS eschatology, all souls are God's spirit children and are recognised as a loss. If the spirit, however, has not actually entered the body, then it would not be accorded similar rites and mourning as an older child. It is uncertain at exactly what point the spirit enters the body,[47] but many LDS believe that until the child has breathed the first breath of life, the spirit and body do not claim each other. On the other hand, there is doctrine that explains how the spirit unites with the body before birth and in fact governs its growth in the womb (Abraham 5:7). McConkie (1979: 105) also discusses this distinction between the spirit and the first breath of life, and the possibility that a fetus could indeed have a spirit. As long as the fetus or embryo has a spirit then all of those that did not survive past pregnancy will have the opportunity for resurrection and salvation.[48] As such, the parents of these babies should also have the opportunity to raise their child at a later date.

---

[47] It is because of this uncertainty that abortion is vehemently opposed by the church.

As a person who is concerned with how religious faiths help their followers cope with the anxieties presented by death, I am fascinated by the LDS eschatology, for so much of it seems consumed with the need to allay peoples' fear of the unknown. People are afraid of dying and existing no more, but eternal life is assured and, as LDS practitioners, they may even be granted exaltation and deification. People are afraid of an existence without their family, but through LDS doctrine, they will have the opportunity to live for eternity surrounded by their family. A person's concerns are resolved, and if any of the theology seems ambiguous or contradictory, it is explained that we must wait for future revelations to make it clear. If someone questions the authenticity of these revelations and the ability of the prophet, it is claimed that the prophet is chosen by God and that the prophet could not introduce corruption into the church.

5.6 Concluding Remarks

The overall optimism that LDS practitioners hold towards death stems from the belief that life is not ended by death, and that mortality is only a short mission in preparation for the afterlife. As rewarding and comforting as faith in the LDS belief system may be, it is not 'perfect.' For anyone who has experienced the death of someone close, this air of optimism may seem a little out place. After all, while one may appreciate that the deceased is now in a better place, it does little to wipe out the pain that the person is not here now. Those who are overwhelmed in their grief may be scorned by other LDS practitioners for expressing exorbitant sorrow, as this is a display of what McConkie calls 'spiritual instability' (1979: 519).

---

[48] This is applicable regardless of whether or not the pregnancy ended from miscarriage, abortion, ectopic pregnancy, or stillbirth.

While everyone that I spoke to in my study told how their faith had enriched their lives and successfully constructed meaning in the face of death, there were a few who raised some issues of discontent. The major issue addressed here was the feeling that by being LDS, there is an added pressure to try and be hopeful to the extent that one is not allowed to openly grieve deeply without feelings of guilt or selfishness. They verified that there is much pressure on the bereaved to be strong and positive, and anger at God for permitting the death is just not permitted. As one person commented, "our church gives us the impression that if we have enough faith, we shouldn't have pain in life" (Interview with 'Henrietta,' August 16, 2000).

This is potentially a deeply troubling aspect of faith. While faith can promote hope and a positive regard for where the deceased is now, it does not completely negate the intense pain of loss that is experienced by the bereaved. This can be especially true to the parent of a deceased child who is often taught that he or she should be rejoicing because his or her child will be in the celestial kingdom. It is actually advised in Gone Too Soon, an LDS grief manual, that people should never comfort the bereaved parents of a deceased child with the comment, well-intentioned that it might be, that they now have a reason to work harder to get to the celestial kingdom. This belief is widespread within the popular culture, but is ultimately insensitive as it suggests that the family was unrighteous in the first place and may have needed this experience as a lesson (Sherri Devashrayee Wittwer 1994: 76).

It would be unnatural not to fear death or grieve the loss of a loved one but while the experience of grief is acknowledged by the church, there is the attitude and conviction that an exorbitant grieving process is unnecessary. There is a subtle pressure to comply, and as one person commented quite simply, "it's like one of those unwritten rules" of the faith (Interview with "Florence," August 14, 2000).

As discussed earlier, LDS funerary rites are quite simple and are not deeply intertwined with theology and symbolism as are so many of the rites of other Christian denominations. For example, in the Roman Catholic faith, the rites are so rich in symbolism and tradition that many practitioners are not fully aware of the meanings behind the rites and symbols. In contrast, there are no LDS objects of worship to comfort and aid in the healing process. There are no displays of the cross in the LDS church, or any other poignant reminders of the suffering that occurs in the dying process. As Christ is remembered as the resurrected, living Christ, and as LDS members shy away from any reminders of His dying process, this serves as an example of how the emotional upheaval caused by death is evaded by LDS members. While death is inevitable, and is anticipated, the actual physical process of dying as in the case of a terminal illness is, if not pushed aside, not emphasised. Little is mentioned about how the people are supposed to cope with their impending death outside of the comfort that is provided by belief in the transcendence.

While the plan of salvation offers incentive for people to strive to improve themselves, there is also the philosophical dilemma of when enough improvement has been attained. Because of the plan, there is an additional fear that if one dies now, he or she will not have the opportunity to progress as much as one should, and there is also the anxiety that this will have an affect on the place he or she will attain in the afterlife. While it could be said that one will not die until that improvement takes place, this does not seem to do much to alleviate the anxiety of one who is ever conscious of one's own shortcomings. The attempt to prove oneself simply never ends.

The notion of time is often interpreted by the LDS as being part of an infinite line. One person explained to me that one should think of eternity as being a string of infinite length, and along this string is a small knot. That knot represents our mortal existence (Interview with 'Francis,' August 14, 2000). This little knot on the infinite line is a period of earthly probation, designed so that people will have the opportunity to prove whether or not they have the qualities to become gods. The next chapter will illuminate the LDS beliefs regarding the rest of that string, and precisely what this earthly probation has been for.

Chapter 6
From One Life to Another

6.1 The Transition

The LDS consider death to be a transitory state. At the moment of death, the soul separates from the physical body[49], but contrary to what much of the literature suggests, many LDS do not believe that the spirit immediately leaves to go to the hereafter. Several of the people that I Interviewed believe that the spirit lingers until after the body is buried. The spirit cannot be seen, but its presence may be felt by loved ones. As the primary purpose of undergoing the trials and tribulations of mortality is to gain a physical body, the LDS perceive an intimate and profound connection between the body and the spirit. It is not surprising then that the spirit would want to remain around until after its physical remains are buried.

The spirit also lingers after death in order to comfort the bereaved; thus, many of the bereaved are capable of feeling the spirit's presence during this period. For example, one woman related that she could distinctly feel her mother's presence when she arrived for the funeral. She was the only practising member of the church in her family, but when she found out that they were planning a non-LDS service and cremation, she quarrelled with her siblings. Because of this disagreement, she could feel the spirit leaving her, just as her mother had always left when they had disagreed in the past. Her mother was "still the same spirit that she was when she was here, and it was kind of funny, she just left me, and that was it. I didn't feel her again" (Interview with 'Bertha,' on August 8, 2000). The conflict over the funeral service was a repetition of many conflicts they had had in the past, and when the spirit sensed her disapproval, the spirit removed its comforting presence, just as the mother would have left in the past. It was this abrupt exit that convinced the woman beyond a doubt that she had felt her mother's spirit.

---

[49] The soul leaves the body at the moment of death only to be reunited at the resurrection. The soul is a combination of the spirit and body; therefore, when the soul is separate from the body it exists in spirit form.

6.2 The Veil

Before the spirit can proceed to the next existence, the spirit must pass through a veil, a veil similar to the one that the spirit passed through before birth into mortality. This metaphorical veil separates mortality from both the pre-mortal and the post-mortal existences, but while passage through the first veil blanketed the memories of the previous existence, the second restores the memories of the pre-existence, or at least does so partially.[50] This veil, then, symbolises the division, or separation, of humanity from the presence of God (Charles 1999: 93).

The LDS apply this symbolism of the veil to their temples as each person must pass through it in order to enter the celestial room in the temple, and hence enter the presence of God. Historically, the LDS trace the use of the veil in the temple back to Moses' tabernacle (Exodus 25: 22 and 26:33, and Leviticus 16:2). Within the tabernacle, a veil shielded the ark of the covenant where God was known to appear. Thus, the veil was a means of separating the people, including the priests, from the presence of God. As the LDS temples continue to be a sacred place where people aspire to return to the presence of God, the veil continues to be of great symbolic meaning.

The veil is an important symbol of the endowment ceremony which is conducted at LDS temples across the world. The temple ceremony surrounding the veil is rich in symbolism, so much so that according to Victor Turner's work it could be classified as 'multivocal' (Victor Turner 1967: 50). This single object represents several different aspects of the LDS faith. As it is used in the temple, the veil reminds the LDS of promises that have been made to God, and that if these promises are fulfilled, they may pass through the veil and cross over the threshold into the presence of God. Symbolic analysis of the veil as it is used in the temple is, however, quite limited. While there is a ritual act associated with this veil, its presence in the temple thereby prevents both an exegetical (indigenous explanation) and operational (observational) analysis of the symbol, as the outsider can neither enter the temple nor discuss it in detail with those that can. This does not mean, however, that the meanings of the veil itself are 'top-secret' and hidden from any form of analysis.

---

[50] As it states in the Old Testament, "there is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after" (Ecclesiastes 1:11).

The endowment ceremony (see Section 3.7) teaches the initiates the knowledge they will need to return to the presence of God. Charles identifies five distinct aspects of veil symbolism in the endowment ceremony (1999: 93). First of all, the veil symbolises this separation between God and His children. Second, the process of passing through the veil represents the eligibility and right of the male initiates to hold the Melchizedek priesthood. After all, these male initiates would not be eligible to participate in this ceremony if they had not proved their worthiness to hold the Melchizedek priesthood. Third, the veil represents our eligibility to re-enter the presence of God because of the atoning sacrifice of Christ. With the atonement, Christ has given all of His brothers and sisters the opportunity to enter the celestial kingdom. The fourth aspect of the symbol is that it is a reminder of the final judgement yet to come and that the initiates must continue to prove themselves. The fifth is that the veil serves as a reminder of the divine sentinels that guard the entrance to the celestial kingdom, and that the initiate will need to prove his or her worthiness to them before entering.

This aspect is quite significant as one of the primary functions of the endowment is to provide the initiate with the "key words, signs and tokens to be able to pass by the sentinels placed to guard the way to God's presence" (1999: 93). I believe that the ritual surrounding the veil serves as a metaphorical key because it provides the knowledge necessary to unlock the gates to the celestial kingdom. Because of the sacred nature of these key words, they are never discussed outside of the temple and it is impossible for the researcher to precisely analyse this symbolism. Using the information that is available, though, it is obvious that the veil is a significant symbol of LDS temple ritual and that it directly corresponds with their beliefs regarding the transition from this life into the next.

While the LDS believe that the memory veil is lifted in the next life, there is uncertainty as to when and how that actually takes place. I was informed, for example, that once passage through the veil is complete, "you have the memory of this earth, you have the meaning of the pre-existence and then you have the added meaning of 'here I am, coming back...'" (Interview with 'Betty,' on August 8, 2000). Yet another person informed me that the veil should be thought of as a state of being rather than an actual physical barrier. Instead of thinking of the transition as being immediate, the passage through the veil should be seen as more of a gradual restorative process of gaining knowledge as opposed to the mere metaphorical lifting of memory (Interview with 'Elijah,' on August 13, 2000). As such, the veil cannot be regarded as a literal, physical barrier.

Because the LDS do not believe that a person dies and goes immediately to dwell in heaven or hell, it would be confusing to think that the veil would immediately be lifted restoring memory in its entirety. As the 'tests' of faith are not complete at the moment of death, entrance into the multi-tiered heaven is still off in the future and will occur after the final judgement. Because there is still this probationary period of testing in the spirit world (see Section 6.2), it is unlikely that a person's memory of the pre-existence would be fully restored at this time, and thus, 'Elijah' has provided quite a logical interpretation.

When I undertook my field research, I had quite a limited understanding of the veil, and quickly discovered that the veil was a powerful, if subtle, component of these peoples' understandings of how mortal life begins, and how life continues after death. Despite the extensive conversations I have had on this topic, however, I believe that I still have a limited understanding of what this veil really means. While I have no doubt how meaningful the veil is to my informants' lives, the nuances of how the veil is to be interpreted vary significantly. This observation was verified by one informant who clarified matters for me a little by stating that while they all believe in it, their understanding of it is limited, and as such, its precise meaning is difficult to convey. The actual mechanics of how it works are also unknown or little understood; hence, it is a subject that is not really preached about in the church (Interview with 'Connor,' on August 9, 2000).

Even though allusions to the veil are not all that prominent in the official doctrine, it is something that has become ingrained within the LDS culture, and is alluded to quite often both orally and in written sources when the subject of death and the hereafter is raised. For example, the LDS often refer to the veil as being 'thin,' which in turn implies that the spirit world is not all that far away, and that God is not all that far away either. Because the veil is thin, the ancestors are capable of seeing through the veil and watching over us. As long as the ancestors are able to witness our daily lives, ties between the extended family are maintained through the generations and this connection will probably be quite beneficial when the entire extended family is reunited in the celestial kingdom. Occasionally mortals are even gifted with the ability to see through the veil and see a loved one on the other side (Interview with 'Katrina,' on August 19, 2000). When people die, their loved ones are also there to greet them on the other side of the veil. These popular beliefs demonstrate that the association of the veil as a thin barrier between this world and the next has the potential of providing a great deal of solace and a comfortable framework in which to ease the pain of loss associated with death.

6.3 Paradise and the Spirit Prison

Once the spirits leave mortality and enter the post-mortal existence, they reside in the spirit world to await the second coming of Christ and the final judgement. The spirit world is multi-dimensional, containing the realms of paradise and the spirit prison. These realms are organised much the same as they are here, and as they were in the pre-existence. Hence, it would be wrong to imagine these places consisting of spirits living aimlessly without direction, for they are still following a plan of progression and have much work to accomplish.

The realm of paradise is a state of happiness and peace experienced by those who accepted the gospel and led righteous lives. Within this realm of paradise, the spirits are further ranked according to how well they fulfilled the tenets of their faith during mortality. Family relationships and the order of the priesthood are carried over from mortality to this new state of existence.

The spirit prison contains two kinds of spirits: those who have not yet had the opportunity to receive the gospel of Christ and those who had rejected the gospel of Christ during mortality.[51] The existence of the spirit prison[52] is seen as evidence of a merciful God who demonstrates His compassion and forgiveness by allowing as many opportunities for salvation as possible.

---

[51] By accepting the gospel and the vicarious temple ordinances, his or her spirit may be able to leave his or her prison and go on to paradise.

[52] To a certain degree, however, even the spirits residing in paradise experience a form of imprisonment as they have not yet obtained the fullness of joy that comes with the resurrection (McConkie 1979: 755).

Even the missionary work of mortality is extended into the hereafter so that people will be able to learn of the gospel. Indeed, many of the righteous spirits who have the right to dwell in paradise will be assigned to serve as missionaries in the spirit prison to preach the gospel, and allow those spirits the chance for a glorious resurrection. These missionary assignments are seen as serious work, work that Christ Himself undertook in the three days comprising His death and resurrection.

In fact, the early church perceived that this missionary work would be the principal function of the spirit world (Bitton 1998: 34) and this belief has continued to be an influential perception. This missionary work also provides a powerful explanation or justification for an unexpected death. The rationale that the deceased was called suddenly to serve as a missionary in the spirit world (see Section 5.5) was something that many people in my study commented on and found comfort in.

Since there is so much emphasis placed on the existence of divisions in the heavens based on levels of righteousness, there might also be divisions within the spirit prison. Given the emphasis on redemption, it somehow seems unlikely that good people could be sent to the spirit prison and dwell among such heinous criminals as Hitler.

Furthermore, there must be a special place in the spirit prison for those spirits who have committed the 'unpardonable sin,' that is, they accepted the gospel of Christ, and then rejected and denied Christ.[53] To commit this sin is an unforgivable act for which there is no forgiveness. These spirits will not be given any further opportunities to learn and accept the gospel. For them, the spirit world will be a place where they will have to sit and wait for the final judgement.

---

[53] It was explained to me that, despite Hitler's notorious crimes against humanity, he did not commit the unpardonable sin for he had never known and understood enough of God and the plan to actually reject it.

My interviews showed that many LDS do not perceive much of a distinction between paradise and the spirit prison. Instead, many LDS believe that regardless of whether or not a person had been a church member in life, a person who had led a good righteous life would be rewarded later on in paradise and be offered the opportunity to accept the gospel there.

6.4 The Millennium

The spirit world will end with the second coming of Christ.[54] No one except for God and Christ are aware of when Christ will come again (Matthew 24:36). The LDS believe that the world is fast approaching this second coming, however, and this is evident by the rise in evil, as shown through the increase of war, crime, immorality, social corruption, natural disasters and so forth. As the second coming nears, it becomes even more imperative to have temples across the globe so that all worthy LDS can perform the sacred ordinances. As such, the LDS have embarked on a massive temple building plan so that they will have a place to become closer to God in these times of strife, and so that they will be able to perform more of the vicarious ordinances that will be such an essential part of the millennial work.

At the second coming of Christ, there will be a thousand years of peace and love here on earth. On the first day of Christ's reign the world will suffer from numerous catastrophes, and all those who are unrighteous and morally corrupt will be killed through fire, earthquakes, pestilence and other natural disasters. Righteous people, including both believers and non-believers, will be spared. This destruction of the wicked will pave the way for this harmonious period. Many of the deceased will also be resurrected at this time.

---

[54] In nineteenth century LDS theology, only the LDS were predicted to survive the second coming (Grant Underwood 1993: 52), but this premise has since changed.

This millennial period is necessary in order to disseminate the gospel of Christ to everyone, and to conduct temple and missionary work. The main activity will be the temple work conducted for the dead and it is during the millennium that the vicarious baptisms will be completed for every single person who has ever lived. The information needed to complete this incredible task will be revealed throughout the millennial age.

During the millennium, there will be no such thing as disease or death as we know it now, but people will continue to have free agency so that they will still have the ability to determine for themselves whether or not to accept the gospel. This in turn suggests that the LDS expect that even at this time not everyone will want to join the church. While people will still be mortal during this period, once they reach old age they will turn instantaneously into an immortal condition. Children will continue to be born, and their lives will be a probationary period much like ours is now (McConkie 1979: 497).

Christ will lead a theocracy around the world, and Satan will be bound from having any influence. As one woman elaborated, "it is our righteousness that will bind Satan, our desire not to sin anymore, and I think that when you take Satan out of our lives... things will be as the Lord intended them to be ..." (Interview with 'Bertha,' on August 8, 2000). With the destruction of wicked influences, there will be little temptation to stray from the path leading to God. Over the millennium, God will also unveil His final revelations and His people will finally have a complete knowledge of the plan. Many of the cynics will be convinced at this time of the 'true' church of Christ. After these thousand years have passed, God will free Satan from his bondage as one last test for His people to prove themselves after having lived all this time in peace and harmony. There will be a final battle between Jesus and Satan, and it is prophesied that Jesus will win. After his defeat, Satan will be banished forever from having any influence.

After this battle, it will be time for the resurrection and then the Last Judgement. At the time of this resurrection, the spirit is reunited with its physical body and this body is transformed (or immortalised) into a state of perfection. People will then be assigned to their stations of glory in the judgement (the celestial, the terrestrial, and the telestial), or they will be assigned to the kingdom of the devil, the outer darkness. The earth will also be celestialised and will receive its paradisiacal glory (as stated in the tenth article of faith).[55]

6.5 A Multi-Tiered Heaven

Despite the belief that all people will be resurrected, it is also believed that as not all people share an equal status in life, not all people will share an equal status after the final judgement (J. Reuban Clark 1949: 154). As there are many kingdoms on earth, there will be many kingdoms in heaven. Those that go to heaven are resurrected into what are known as the three 'degrees of glory' - the celestial kingdom, the terrestrial kingdom, and the telestial kingdom. All three of these glories are alluded to in the Bible (1Cor15: 40-41) by the apostle Paul, but only two are mentioned by name. The differences in these glories are to be viewed as equal to the difference in brilliance between the sun (the celestial), the moon (the terrestrial), and the stars (the telestial).

It is also believed that there are further divisions within these degrees based on how well a person lived their life according to scripture. As no person is equal to every other person in a kingdom here on earth, so shall no person be completely equal to all the other people within a kingdom in heaven. Interestingly enough, in its earlier years, the church tended to dismiss these intermediate degrees of salvation even though they had been revealed to their prophet. In its early years the LDS church "did not emphasize that the infinite variations in individual righteousness in this life would result in correspondingly varied placement in a multileveled heaven in the next..." (Underwood 1993: 41), but the contemporary church now places more of an emphasis on these divisions in its teachings. These divisions are not meant to be prejudicial in any way (that is, they are not based on distinctions such as race and gender), but merely reflect the infinite variations in righteous behaviour. As people will continue to progress, they will be able to progress within their assigned level of glory.

---

[55] The tenth article of faith states: "we believe... that Zion (the new Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory."

Additionally, these divisions are also believed to somehow be representative of 'comfort zones.' A morally righteous individual will not reside in the same place as a sinner. While even those who did not lead righteous lives will all be offered salvation, God will still reward those who obeyed His covenants. Essentially, these multiple tiers in heaven demonstrate that we are only equal in so far as we have all been granted the gift of free agency and the ability to make our own decisions. Because of eternal progression, we are not even born equal, as we all possess the various attributes and knowledge gained in the pre-mortal existence.

The celestial kingdom is the highest of the glories, and is divided into three levels. It is reserved for only those who have led the most righteous lives and for children who died before the age of accountability. Adults entering the celestial kingdom must have developed a personal and independent testimony of faith (Burton 1994: 1036). They must also demonstrate the utmost obedience and commitment to God. Like the all of the resurrected beings, the spirit of a celestial being will be resurrected with his or her body, and their immortalised bodies will be sanctified, and thereby made perfect, free from any physical afflictions.

Those that are resurrected into the highest level of the celestial kingdom, however, achieve a state of exaltation and become deified. Exaltation essentially refers to the process in which the celestial being ultimately becomes deified. It should be kept in mind that God Himself is an exalted man and was once mortal as we are now. The celestial beings that become exalted will eventually have the same powers as God does now, and will receive what is known as the 'fullness of the glory of God,' for it is a glory as brilliant as the sun. Quite literally then, the most righteous and faithful may actually become gods themselves. To be deified, one must have been sealed in the temple ordinances and as a result, the deified celestial beings will dwell with their family for all of eternity in this kingdom. However, if one's children have not fulfilled their covenants, the children will go to one of the lower kingdoms. The celestial beings have the ability to visit family in the lower kingdoms, but the terrestrial and the telestial beings do not share this privilege.

The ultimate goal of eternal progression is the achievement of this deification. One of my informants explained, though, that this deification is not something that happens instantaneously. If life is truly infinite, then there is an immense span of time over which this could take place; hence, it is a state that one gradually inherits even though one has already earned the right to achieve that status (Interview with 'Betty,' on August 8, 2000). Since deification is such a substantial undertaking, it is only logical to the LDS that there will be this additional adjustment and learning process.

Those who accepted the faith in the spirit world still have the opportunity to go to the celestial glory, including the highest level, as long as they have been righteous and were fully repentant. A single person can go to the celestial glory, but he or she cannot go to the highest level and be deified, as deification requires one to be part of a sealed marital unit.[56] There is a popular belief, however, that people who died before having the opportunity to get married in the temple will have the opportunity to do so later on in the hereafter, perhaps during the millennium. The LDS are promised that everyone will have the chance to be married so that everyone will have the opportunity to enter the highest level of the celestial kingdom.

By receiving the fullness of God's glory, it is believed that the deified celestial beings will even be able to have their own spirit children. As parents are only caregivers of their mortal children, one of the incentives to becoming deified is this opportunity to have eternal increase, the ability to create spirit children the same as the Heavenly Parents have created human life. As eternal increase is one of the primary functions of what Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother do now, it will also be one of the primary functions of the gods yet to come. As the deified being creates and rules worlds as well as possesses the ability to have children, the LDS believe that it only makes sense that a deified being must have an eternal companion.

As briefly discussed in the last chapter, the 'law of consecration' is one of the covenants that the LDS must embrace in their lives. The law of consecration refers to the effort and commitment that the LDS invest in building Zion here on earth. This dedication is one of the features that will distinguish a celestial being from the rest. The celestial kingdom will not be found in an arbitrary location somewhere in the universe, it will be located right here on earth.[57] If people are to be celestialized, then they must dedicate themselves to building Zion right now and demonstrate their willingness to transform their own world (Charles 1999: 90).

---

[56] Those who are married outside of the temple are only married for 'time,' that is, 'till death do us part,' and are therefore not sealed for all of eternity.

[57] It is believed, however, that the planet earth will be relocated somewhere in the universe, to be closer to the place where the Heavenly Parents reside.

The terrestrial kingdom is reserved for those who believed in the LDS faith but did not live their lives in full according to LDS doctrine. Otherwise, it is for those who lived good lives, but did not accept Christ or His doctrine. The terrestrial beings are not deified, and therefore will receive only the fullness of Christ, not God. Their glory is that of the moon for it is a reflected glory as "there are restrictions and limitations placed on them" (McConkie 1979: 784). Only individuals, not families, may be resurrected to this kingdom. Essentially, the only significant difference between those who receive the celestial glory and those who receive the terrestrial glory is that the celestial beings took every advantage of the covenants to make themselves perfect. The terrestrial beings may have accepted the gospel and repented, but they did not embrace the covenants to the extent that they were worthy of the celestial glory.

The telestial beings are those who led 'wicked' lives, and did not accept the faith on earth and did not repent fully in the spirit world. Upon entering the telestial kingdom, the telestial beings become ministering angels to those of the celestial and terrestrial kingdoms while the terrestrial beings serve those of the celestial kingdom. Most of the people that have ever lived will reside in the telestial kingdom where the telestial beings will be "as innumerable as the stars in the firmament of heaven, or as the sand upon the seashore" (Doctrine and Covenants 76: 109).

To varying degrees, these people led worldly, selfish lives with no firm commitment or obedience to God and His plan. They are resurrected to varying degrees of glory "as one star differs from another in glory..." (Doctrine and Covenants 76: 98). As a telestial world is "one inhabited by people who cannot be with either the Father or the Son" (Charles 1999: 81), the telestial beings will receive neither the fullness of glory of God nor Christ and its glory in this will be pale in comparison to the glory of the celestial and terrestrial kingdoms. The spirits who continue to reject the gospel of Christ even after the millennium will be sent to dwell in the kingdom of the outer darkness, a kingdom without glory (Doctrine and Covenants 88:24). Those thoroughly resistant to the 'truth' will then suffer from the eternal wrath of God.

It is the rare individual who will be sent to dwell in the 'outer darkness,' a state of misery that is only experienced by the most 'wicked.' These wicked people "shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, and this because of their own iniquity, being led captive by the will of the devil" (Alma 40: 13). These people did not obey the covenant of God during mortality and are known as the 'sons of perdition.'[58]

More specifically, the sons of perdition have committed the unpardonable sin. While they will still be resurrected, the sons of perdition will not be permitted entrance into any one of the three glories, and will endure a misery of such magnitude that it will be completely incomprehensible to those outside of it (Burton 1994: 999). The unpardonable sin is only capable of being committed by those who had a full knowledge of Christ when they denied Him, and thus were fully aware of what they were rejecting.

This labeling of the unpardonable sin is interesting because it means that all other people who committed sins of great magnitude to humanity are able to go the spirit prison, and hence be resurrected into one of the glories if they repent and accept the gospel. As such, "there's not going to be a lot of people from this whole earth's history who are going to be thrown into complete outer darkness"

---

[58] Satan is also known as 'Perdition,' and, thus, those that have committed the unpardonable sin as he once did are known as either followers or sons of perdition.

(Interview with 'Bertha,' on August 8, 2000). Almost everyone will be offered redemption no matter what other sins they might have committed.

There is an endless effort among many of the LDS to strive to make it to the celestial glory, and live there with Heavenly Father and the extended family. The lower two kingdoms are not as well understood as the celestial kingdom, and this is reflected in the varying responses I received from some of my informants. Since the emphasis is placed on the celestial kingdom, with the ultimate goal of exaltation and deification, there appears to be little interest in learning of the other two kingdoms and the outer darkness. The idea of being deified is somewhat intimidating to a few, but it is also seen as the ultimate motivation to become a better person.

6.6 Concluding Remarks

The prospect of a multi-tiered heaven is a profound guiding influence on the lives of the LDS. Indeed, understanding the motivations behind LDS practices cannot be separated from an understanding of the LDS beliefs in the afterlife. A comprehension of these influences clarifies some of the practices of the church that are frequently misinterpreted. For example, the former practice of plural marriage within the church cannot be discerned properly without such an analysis of their beliefs about what happens after death.

As discussed in chapter two, plural marriage was a controversial issue that antagonised their neighbours, and in fact lead to LDS migrations into western Canada. The concepts of celestial exaltation and eternal marriage were inextricably connected with plural marriage in the nineteenth century church (Ostling and Ostling 1999: 67). If a man had multiple wives, he would greatly increase his progeny and the birth of spirits waiting to be born. If the celestial husband is to have multiple wives, like God, he would also greatly increase his eternal increase. And if God can have more than one wife, and God was once a man like we are now, then it becomes conceivable that the mortal man should have more than one wife.[59]

Even though plural marriage was prohibited by the church over a century ago, it is, however, still practised by many small separate fundamentalist groups. The church's early attitude that the freedom of religion promised in the constitution should allow the practice of plural marriage has been maintained by these few fundamentalist groups that still practice it. The irony is, however, that while the Canadian government prohibited the practice and punished those who partook in it, it is now the LDS church that prohibits it and disciplines its practitioners. It is now the Canadian government that turns a blind eye to its existence in Canada and is hesitant to interfere on the grounds that it does not want to infringe upon the religious freedoms guaranteed in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Robert J. McCue 2000: 286).

While plural marriage was officially prohibited by the church in the late nineteenth century, it was a significant part of LDS identity, and the sense of LDS peoplehood. Issues of identity will be discussed further in the next chapter.

---

[59] A man can still be sealed to more than one wife. As such, a man might be monogamously married in mortality, but would have more than one wife in the hereafter.

Chapter 7
Conclusion

The previous five chapters have briefly covered a broad expanse of the theology and history of the LDS Church. In comparison to other Christian denominations, the theology and history of the LDS church is rather unusual, and as such, the church does not quite fit the 'typical' Christian profile. This uniqueness is exemplified by analysing the commitment that LDS practitioners have applied to living the faith in their everyday lives, and how their memory of their history shapes their understanding of their church. Because of this distinctiveness, it is possible and, in fact, practical, to regard the LDS as a 'people,' not just a church. Certainly from the very beginning, the LDS have seen themselves as a distinct and separate people, and this classification is a useful tool in an anthropological study of their beliefs and culture.

Even though members of the contemporary church come from many nations across the world, and from a variety of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, the church strictly ensures that protocol and doctrine are followed universally around the world, with little deviation from the norm. Despite the 'internationalisation' of the church and the variety of backgrounds that are represented in the membership, the LDS church is so cohesive that its members identify themselves as one 'peculiar' people.[60] Much of this identity as a religious group revolves around the idea that they are a chosen people with distinct beliefs, a distinct culture, a distinct vocabulary (if not language), a distinct history, a few distinct holidays, and a distinct set of prohibitions that separate them from outsiders.

---

[60] The LDS derive this term 'peculiar' from the King James Bible (1 Peter 2:9) where it reads "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

As stated in the Introduction, this work is not intended to evaluate the authenticity of Joseph Smith's prophetic claims or the legitimacy of the Book of Mormon. As fervent as the debate may be over this prophet/fraud dichotomy, I believe that the critical issue at hand is a study of LDS interpretations of the teachings of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon, and in turn, how the LDS have constructed a way of life that is intricately connected with their beliefs in the afterlife and their recollection of a shared LDS history. This recollection has formed what Ostling and Ostling refer to as the 'Mormon communal memory' (1999: 262), a communal history that has dramatised certain events and intensively promoted them in such a manner that they serve as reminders of the sacrifices that the LDS pioneers made for their faith and the rewards the pioneers received in response for their prayers and righteousness. This sense of communal history serves to unite a universal LDS membership that does not have an ancestral connection to the early church.

One popular example of this communal history is seen through their representation of the 'miracle of the seagulls,' which even warrants its own monument in Temple Square. This story is recounted to LDS youngsters in their church groups as an example of how the LDS pioneers triumphed in the face of conflict. In this case, the pioneers were faced with an invasion of crickets, in 1848, that seemed sure to demolish their first crops in the Salt Lake Basin. In response to the immense faith shown by the LDS, God sent a flock of seagulls that ate the marauding insects; hence, the crops were saved from destruction.

With the way that these events in the early church are promoted and subsequently shared among church members around the world, all members are believed to have a connection with this history regardless of whether or not their ancestors were actually LDS pioneers. For example, each July, members across the world will celebrate 'Pioneer Day' and how the pioneers triumphed over their hardships and oppression. Because of the manner in which it is remembered, all LDS are invited to share in the struggles that it took to establish and maintain the church, and it is suggested that all LDS share equally in this sense of communal history.

Even though the doctrine of the LDS church is universal, it is to be expected that the experiences of regional LDS groups will demonstrate some slight differences in culture and in the interpretation of doctrine. Given the location of my fieldwork, I have looked for differences in culture or interpretation among the LDS community in southern Alberta. This LDS community has maintained close ties with the Utah church, and it should not be presumed that the southern Albertan LDS community was at any time isolated from church headquarters. These close ties are evident in the frequency of travel to and from Utah for both vacations and for schooling (particularly at the Brigham Young University in Provo), and in the rather high intermarriage rate between American and Albertan members who have met in Utah (see Section 1.3). It is, however, not surprising that some of the traditions and the 'communal memory' of the Albertan community vary from those in the United States. After all, the LDS' experiences in Alberta must have somehow contributed to the shaping of their identity.

The LDS pioneers of southern Alberta, who arrived towards the end of the nineteenth century, came with a firm conviction of what it meant to be LDS and with a vivid recollection of their persecution in the United States. This legacy helped shape their early self-identification as a people possessing a distinct culture, but the Albertan LDS, while maintaining strong ties with church communities to the south, soon forged new, local aspects of this identity.

Lynn A. Rosenvall (2000: 4) shows that from the beginning of LDS settlement in southern Alberta, outsiders recognised the LDS as a distinct cultural group. This recognition was based in part on the way that the LDS settled the land. LDS settlements were readily distinguished from others because they were all based upon a grid pattern that was oriented towards the four cardinal directions, and they were mostly arranged into 'farm villages.' This distinct arrangement seemed a bit peculiar to outsiders as the organisation of the homes into a small settlement meant that the farmers had to travel out to their farm land in the surrounding area every day. To the LDS, however, this arrangement seemed quite natural as the close proximity of their homes meant that the community was able to partake in its almost daily church activities as conveniently as if they had lived in an urban environment. The non-LDS who did not reside within these farm villages, lived in isolated farmsteads instead. Their journeys into town were not as convenient; thus, their contact with the social community was much more limited than the LDS.

The practice of keeping all of these houses in intimate local neighbourhoods allowed the LDS to remain in cohesive units that distinguished them from the non-members nearby, and helped to maintain a metaphorical boundary between them and outsiders. Furthermore, the ability of the LDS to partake in their regular church activities allowed them to participate regularly in the activities that helped identify themselves as a chosen people. As automobile use increased during the twentieth century, these farm villages have almost ceased to exist, however, and are no longer an identifying marker of LDS communities.

The journey into Alberta presented the LDS with a different climate and topography, and undoubtedly this would have had some influence on their adjustment to the country, how they carried out their activities, and whether or not their harvests were successful. Their arrival in southern Alberta also introduced them to a different cultural milieu from what they had been used to in Utah and Idaho. They were once again a minority in a foreign territory, this time surrounded by Blood Natives,[61] North-West Mounted Police, and Canadian ranchers of varying backgrounds. The arrival of the Hutterites in the early twentieth century added to this cultural milieu.

Andrew H. Hedges analyses how these factors ultimately determined "the manner in which southern Alberta's early Mormons lived and thought ..." (2000: 76) through the study of "the journals, diaries and autobiographies of those who pioneered the area" (2000: 76). Despite the fact that the LDS developed relatively amicable relationships with their neighbours, including the Blood Natives, the LDS limited their contact with outsiders and preferred to develop intimate communities of their own. They were further united in their common poverty and the challenges posed by the harsh environment. They learned to adapt to the cultural milieu that they encountered, developing friendly relationships while still maintaining their own lifestyle and their own separate identity as a 'peculiar' people. Even to this day, LDS wards in the urban centres of Canada reflect some semblance of the self-sufficient farming villages from their early years in southern Alberta. These wards still possess "the unity, mutual helpfulness and social-mindedness for which Mormons have striven throughout their history" (Arrington 1990: 16).

They maintained their religious cohesiveness against what they perceived to be immorality, and their commitment to living the faith possibly even 'out-Mormoned' Utah in its religious zeal (Hedges 2000: 91). As they were faced with opposing belief systems, the LDS strengthened their resolve to maintain a unique identity in the midst of this cultural milieu and to maintain an intimate relationship with the church in Salt Lake City.

---

[61] The Blood reserve was established in 1883, shortly before the arrival of the LDS. At this time there were nearly two thousand Bloods living on the reserve. The southern boundary of the reserve borders the northern part of Cardston, and to this day, one must go through or around the reserve to enter Cardston.

While I believe that it can be said that their experiences in Alberta have shaped a somewhat localised LDS identity, ultimately the LDS in southern Alberta are not all that different from the LDS everywhere, especially the American LDS. As stated in the Introduction, intermarriage between American and Canadian LDS is common, and this would help maintain homogeneity within the church. As it is popular for LDS members to receive their post-secondary education in Utah, they have the opportunity there to mingle with members from all over the United States and Canada. This socialisation would also encourage homogenous interpretations of belief and lifestyle.

During my two periods of field research, in August 2000 and February 2001, I asked many of the participants whether or not they themselves perceived any cross-cultural differences in the LDS church. All of the participants viewed cultural variation to be minimal. The differentiations that were proposed focused on the differences in urban versus rural lifestyles and on what it meant to be LDS in a primarily non-LDS region versus living in an LDS dominated region.

Even though the church is widely spread out across the world, it has remained an extremely structured church with little room for any deviation from the procedures and doctrines dictated from Salt Lake City. There are of course subtle differences in tradition. These are represented in such areas as the variety of food prepared for church functions, the architectural style of the church meetinghouses (which in tropical areas might not even be located in a building at all), and in the way that people are greeted. For example, as one man related from his two year mission in Hawaii, the only tangible cultural variation he observed was that any time a person spoke in church, he or she would always begin with the expression 'aloha' (Interview with 'Noah,' on February 24, 2001).

Despite these minor cross-cultural differences, the LDS church does not permit cultural and religious syncretism in the establishment of its new missions. Because the congregations are not permitted to deviate from the format dictated by Salt Lake City, there is almost a "mini-culture within a culture" (Interview with 'Noah,' on February 24, 2001) In other words, the members have a system of beliefs that are incongruous with the belief system of the larger culture in which they reside, but the LDS minority are still members and participants of that larger culture. These mini-cultures are believed to be practically identical cross-culturally because of the emphasis that the church places on a universal systematic structure and belief system.

If inconsistencies in this universal pattern do exist, the LDS believe that these inconsistencies would only exist in new missions where the church structure has not yet been fully established and made fully consistent with the mother church. One example brought to my attention concerned a Japanese ward (Interview with 'Noah,' on February 24, 2001). At the opening of Sunday School every week, the church handbook requires the members to partake in 'opening exercises.' The Japanese mistakenly interpreted these opening exercises to mean physical exercises and incorporated a simple program of floor exercises. When the general authority[62] came by to review the progress of the mission, he was shocked to discover this misinterpretation and promptly informed them of what the church had meant by opening exercises, namely an opening prayer or song.

Interpretations of the doctrine can also be expected to vary cross-culturally. I was frequently reminded by the participants in my study that the doctrine is universal; thus, the beliefs should be consistent from one culture to the next. However, if variations in doctrinal belief do exist, this is simply based on how much the members have undertaken to educate themselves in the doctrine. In other words, some people have studied the doctrine more than others have, and sometimes those who have not invested a great deal of effort in this study have beliefs that are not substantiated by doctrine.

---

[62] A member of the church who has been chosen by the president to serve in a senior administrative position.

This variation was evident in my own field research regarding certain matters of theological inquiry. In this case, it was not difficult to determine that some of the variations in responses that I received were connected to the level of study that the participants had obtained in their lives. Furthermore, the men were usually more educated in the doctrine. Because it is typically only men who serve missions, and it is only men who are ordained into the priesthood, LDS men are given greater opportunity and motivation to learn about the more intellectually challenging aspects of the faith.

Overall, there is the feeling that despite barriers of distance, language, or politics, the LDS share a bond world-wide that supersedes any other kind of relationship. Whatever differences may exist because of the variation in experiences, the LDS identify more with members from around the world than they do with non-members who may be of the same nationality, speak the same language, or may even be part of the same biological family. This transnational sense of identity is such a powerful bond that some people believe that the LDS should be considered an ethnic group.

Certainly some of the people that I spoke to do consider themselves to be an ethnic people, even if they do not always fulfil what others believe to be prerequisites of ethnicity. For instance, the primary difference between them and other ethnic groups is that the LDS church is not 'closed.' They are fairly open and receptive towards the inclusion of others, and in fact, actively recruit new members across the world. Furthermore, the colour of one's skin is essentially considered to be an irrelevant aspect of membership as the church does not exclude membership on the basis of skin colour or nationality. For many years, the church did exclude those of African descent from the Melchizedek priesthood, but that has since been reversed as the church sought to expand its cross-cultural membership.

Ultimately, the concept of ethnicity does not appear to be well defined, and its application is debated in academic circles. Armand L. Mauss, a sociologist, and Keith Parry, an anthropologist, have presented papers discussing opposing interpretations of this concept of the LDS as an ethno-religious group. It is because of the very internationalisation of the church that Mauss believes that it is no longer reasonable to identify the LDS as an ethnic group. While in their early years they could have been classified as an ethno-religious group, in Mauss's opinion, their internationalisation and greater urbanisation has greatly lessened their 'homogeneity' to the point that North American LDS are really not all that different from the rest of North American society.

On the other hand, as far as Parry is concerned, the first and most important defining aspect of the LDS as an ethno-religious group is their self-identification as such. He also demonstrates that LDS experiences in southern Alberta were similar to other ethno-religious groups who settled in western Canada in the early twentieth century.

While I disagree with some of Mauss's conclusions, I think that he addresses some important issues. The first is the contemporary fascination of western society with the application of the term 'ethnicity,' and the argument that this use may not always be appropriate. For example, the substitution of 'ethnicity' for the traditional LDS use of the term 'peculiarity' may be more ideologically acceptable, but not necessarily more appropriate. A second issue with the classification of ethnicity is that there is little consensus in the academic literature of what ethnicity actually means let alone what it should include. One of the problems that I find inherent in Mauss's essay, however, is that he does not actually proclaim what his interpretation of ethnicity is nor does he explain how he applies it in his examination of the LDS. For my purposes, I prefer to regard ethnicity as relating to a group of people who acknowledge themselves to be different because of their customs, language, characteristics, and sense of communal history, origins or descent.

Mauss analyses some parallels between the LDS and the Jews as an example of ethnicity (1990: 335-336). Both groups believe themselves to be a chosen people, both believe themselves to be descended from the original inhabitants of Israel, both have suffered persecution and commemorate their survival despite these obstacles, both identify with a special, divinely ordained homeland, both groups are encountered world-wide, both are viewed antagonistically or suspiciously to some degree by outsiders, and though this is not mentioned by Mauss, both have a divinely ordained set of food and substance prohibitions. Another parallel not mentioned by Mauss was briefly discussed earlier in chapter two, in regard to the departure of the LDS from Nauvoo, Illinois, in the mid-nineteenth century. Because of conflict with their neighbours, the LDS left their settlement in search of the promised land, and compared themselves to the Jewish exodus from Egypt in search of an unseen promised land. They identified with this so strongly, that they even referred to their wagon trains as 'the camp of Israel.'

Despite these obvious parallels, Mauss states that there are a number of points in which the LDS differ from the Jews. The LDS do not genetically claim ancient Semitic origins. Additionally, persecution of the LDS does not compare with the Jewish persecution in terms of duration or oppressiveness. And, of course, the Jews do not share the proselytising ambitions of the LDS church resulting in a more homogeneous Jewish culture. The internationalisation of the

LDS church as well as LDS assimilation into secular culture leads Mauss to conclude that the LDS cannot possibly be considered ethnic.

Mauss's argument is limited, particularly with his conclusion that assimilation prohibits the LDS from being considered an ethnic group. As far as assimilation is concerned, it is not hard to see that in North America the LDS have become more and more integrated into western society. However, it should not be assumed that this assimilation is equated with a loss of religiosity. With their principle of 'being in the world, not of the world,' (see Section 5.1), the LDS have worked hard at becoming involved in society by sending their children to public schools, becoming politically involved, and so forth. The LDS have also worked equally as hard, if not more so, at retaining the defining features of LDS identity through participation in church life and doctrine. North American Jews themselves have become more and more integrated with North American society, but Mauss does not seem to associate this trend with a loss of religiosity. Even though many North American Jews are actively involved with western society, they have also maintained a strong sense of identity through participation in synagogue life and doctrine.

Furthermore, if the LDS were as assimilated as Mauss suggests, then it seems to me that the LDS would not have retained such strong insider/outsider boundaries. If the LDS were truly 'assimilated,' then surely it would no longer be required in the testimony of faith to testify that the LDS church is the one and only true church of Christ, and the only faith capable of providing salvation.

Regarding the internationalisation of the LDS church, it would be impossible to deny the existence of some cross-cultural differences. What one must also keep in mind, however, is the level of control that the church maintains over its stakes world-wide, and the fact that there are more similarities than differences. Certainly the level of similarity is such that the few LDS churches I visited in Japan in the summer of 2000 were instantly familiar to me, down to the pictures that were hanging on the wall, the steeple outside, and copies of the LDS magazine 'Ensign' lying about.

I think that this issue of church internationalisation and cross-cultural variation is worthy of further research. There is so much emphasis placed on missionary activity that I wonder if anthropological research has ignored the LDS men and women right here in North America who have served missions abroad and might themselves be the most informed on this issue. Returned missionaries have certainly had a unique opportunity as LDS themselves to witness and experience LDS practices in many regions around the world.

Mauss's comparative analysis between the LDS and the Jews can be studied further in regard to the dichotomies proposed by Max Weber (as discussed by N. J. Demerath III and Phillip E. Hammond 1969: 48-50). According to Weber, theological distinctions between religions can be analysed in greater detail by identifying the goals behind the religious life and the means by which the religious groups obtain these goals. These goals may either be classified as 'this-worldly,' where retribution or compensation for how a person is living his or her life is bestowed upon that person during mortality, or 'otherworldly,' where retribution or compensation is bestowed upon the person in the afterlife.

The second aspect concerns the nature of religious action and can be determined in both this-worldly and otherworldly religious systems. This religious action distinguishes between 'mystical' and 'ascetic' theologies. Mystical theologies advocate the removal of an individual from everyday matters in order to contemplate spiritual matters. Ascetic theologies, much like those of the Jews and the LDS, advocate a lifestyle that permits an individual to partake in everyday matters as long as his or her choices are influenced and motivated by spiritual concerns.

Because of the covenants that the Jews entered into with Jahweh, the Jews were expected to actively partake in the world, and there was a definite emphasis placed on righteous and ethical living. The Jews were considered by Weber to be this-worldly because Jahweh could either compensate or penalise them for their actions sometime during their lives. The ultimate achievement that they could obtain through the fulfilment of their covenants was the arrival of the Messiah and the subsequent arrival of the millennium.

Like the Jews, the LDS should be considered as ascetic, given the emphasis that is placed on righteous living during mortality. The LDS differ from the Jews, however, in that they are otherworldly in regard to their goals. As it has been discussed in this thesis, the LDS believe that the pre-mortal existence is a time of preparation for mortality, and that mortality serves as a probationary period in which every action and choice is seen as preparation for the afterlife. Most definitely, the LDS do believe that God will bestow rewards and consequences in the hereafter based upon people's actions in this life; thus, the LDS have an otherworldly perspective as their goals and overall purpose in life are inextricably linked with the hereafter. After all, the LDS believe that the whole reason for having mortality is so that we may all have the opportunity to be exalted and have a physical body like God.

These otherworldly beliefs significantly influence the way that LDS members live their lives, not only in their practice of rituals, but in the choices they make, from the beverages that they consume (as outlined in the Word of Wisdom), to how many children they should have. As discussed in Section 5.3, the LDS believe that having large families is necessary to expedite the births of the spirit children waiting in heaven to be born, and to expedite the arrival of Christ for the dawning of the millennium. Thus, spiritual guidance is sought from the Heavenly Father as to when a couple should stop having children.

While the Jews and the LDS differ in this aspect of this-worldliness and otherworldliness, they both define lifestyle choices essential for fulfilling the tenets of the faith, and construct boundaries between their group and those that do not fulfil the same tenets. In other words, both groups possess doctrines that require a certain lifestyle that separates them from others and this would appear to suggest that both groups should have a legitimate right to claim uniqueness, if not ethnicity.

Regarding the LDS, Keith Parry applies the term ethnicity "as a cultural phenomenon, as it relates to descent, and, finally, as a matter of boundaries" (1990: 357). Parry analyses the issue of the LDS as an ethno-religious group using the southern Albertan LDS as an example. He begins by referring to something that happened around 1970 while he was conducting field research. He was having a discussion with some Blood Natives and a Catholic priest when the topic of integration arose (1990: 353-355). In this context, these Blood Natives saw themselves, the LDS, and the Hutterites as distinct ethnic groups.[63] The LDS were far more than members of a church, they were a specific group of people. The time that I spent in this region doing fieldwork verified that this interpretation is a popular distinction. The differences between the three groups are viewed to this day as being much more than religious distinctions, as all three are viewed as being 'peoples.'

The issue of integration becomes complicated, though, in the area of conversion, as LDS missionary work is frequently conducted on the reserve. I do not know how many Natives are members, but there are enough to warrant their own branch of the ward. Conversion is infrequent, however, as they typically perceive the missionaries as "emissaries of a locally dominant ethnic group that

---

[64] In general, many Canadian Native groups would object to being included in this classification as 'ethnic' (see David Stymeist 1975).

had set out to serve its own secular interests" and also because "converts and investigations appeared to other Bloods to be abandoning their own people" (Keith Parry 1990: 355). They feel that the LDS church is a 'white' church and that it is not a 'true' Native religion.

Interestingly enough, though, Roman Catholicism is considered by these Natives to be 'Native' and not exclusively 'white' (Interview with 'Nora,' on February 24, 2001). Therefore, Natives who are members of the Catholic church clearly remain members of the Native group of people. There is something about membership in the Catholic church, then, that is perceived merely as a religious affiliation, while membership in the LDS church is perceived as being much more than a religious affiliation and would somehow constitute a loss of Native identity.

Parry develops his theme that ethnicity is a useful concept when applied to the LDS around these three points: "that Mormons are a people as well as a church; that, on this account they are to be thought of as ethnic; and that it is analytically useful to think of them in this way" (1990: 355). Only by looking at the LDS as a people with distinct beliefs can one appreciate that the LDS do have a culture of their own. Even though the LDS may appear to be just another Christian group on the landscape of Canadian pluralism, their distinctive beliefs do create a boundary between them and the outer world, and their beliefs ultimately shape their lives in ways that are quite distinct from other Christian denominations.

One such distinction can be seen in the set of LDS beliefs regarding the family, and temple ordinances performed for the sake of eternal families and familial lineages. Throughout this entire work it should have become apparent that kinship is seen in a rather different light from contemporary Canadian society. Not many non-LDS Canadians view God as being his or her literal father, and Christ as his or her literal brother. The LDS classify one another as 'brothers' and 'sisters,' and regard each other as members of one very large family. Nor would many non-LDS Canadians trace their kinship lines back through time in order to make sure ordinances are performed so that the entire family spanning the generations can be sealed together as one family in the hereafter.

While the claim of the LDS to ethnicity is often rejected on the basis of its rates of conversion and the lack of a specific biological descent group, Parry believes that LDS services for the dead eradicate these problems. By offering the opportunity of baptism into the church for all of their ancestors, "they offer their Mormon identity to gentile ancestors - for Mormons seek their roots ... so as to gather them to Zion" (1990: 358). Critics of LDS ethnicity must also acknowledge that, even in recognised ethnicities, the genetic composition of the group changes through such means as exogamic marriage, extra-marital mating, and adoption.

Parry ends his analysis with the premise that it does not really matter if a consensus is ever reached as to whether or not the LDS are an ethno-religious group. It does not matter if they are proved to be such a group, because what does matter is the application of the concept as a tool for investigation. The analysis of LDS culture under this guise of ethnicity allows one to study significant aspects of the culture that might be missed otherwise. The important issue is that the LDS consider themselves to be a separate and peculiar people with their own customs, characteristics, vocabulary, rituals, and theology. Regardless of whether or not the LDS happen to fit the criteria of a contemporary notion of ethnicity, it should be recognised that the LDS have a special and unique identity all their own that goes beyond membership in a religious denomination.

This thesis has illuminated many of the theological beliefs and rituals that distinguish the LDS church from other Christian denominations, including their notions of a pre-existence, of creation as a matter of organisation of pre-existing matter rather than out of nothing, of a god and goddess possessing bodies similar to our own, of the possibility of deification for all mortals, of eternal family units, and of ordinances that may be performed by proxy for all those who have ever lived.

Many of the LDS beliefs have evolved into folk traditions, including their belief in translation and the story of the Three Nephites (see Section 5.2). Additionally, many ill-defined concepts from the scriptures and doctrine have become focal points for understanding certain aspects of death. For example, LDS beliefs in the veil have helped shaped their understanding of the transition from life, through death, to the hereafter. There are vague references to the veil in the scriptures (including Ether 3: 19-20, Doctrine and Covenants 67: 10, and Doctrine and Covenants 110: 1-2), but my encounters with LDS members show that this concept has had a profound influence on the way they perceive death. This significance was shown not only through comments made by the participants in my study, but also in the literature available in LDS bookstores and on the bookshelves in a couple of the households that I visited.

While it should never be assumed or proposed that there are no cultural differences among the LDS, it is equally as important to acknowledge the remarkable cohesiveness of the LDS church that has formulated an LDS identity that is recognisable worldwide. For such a young church, the growth of the LDS church has been phenomenal as they have a message and an image that is obviously appealing to many. Far more so than any other Christian denomination, the LDS church centres around beliefs in the afterlife, incorporating these beliefs into the plan that the LDS abide by every day of their lives in the hope that they might eventually become gods themselves, with their own worlds to rule.

List of References

Arrington, Leonard. 1990. "Historical Roots of the Mormon Settlement in Southern Alberta." In The Mormon Presence in Canada. Edited by Brigham Y. Card, Herbert C. Northcott, John E. Foster, Howard Palmer, and George K. Jarvis. Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, pp. 3 - 18.

Arrington, Leonard and Davis Bitton. 1992. The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints. Urbana: University of Illinois.

Baumann, Gerd. 1992. "Ritual Implicates 'Others': Rereading Durkheim in a Plural Society." In Understanding Rituals. Edited by Daniel de Coppet. London: Routledge, pp. 97-116.

Beecher, Maureen Ursenbach. 1990. "Mormon Women in Southern Alberta: The Pioneer Years." In The Mormon Presence in Canada. Edited by Brigham Y. Card, Herbert C. Northcott, John E. Foster, Howard Palmer, and George K. Jarvis. Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, pp. 211 - 230.

Bitton, Davis. 1998. "Mormon Funeral Sermons in the Nineteenth Century." In Mormons, Scripture and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson. Edited by Davis Bitton. Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, pp. 27 - 50.

Bloch, Maurice. 1986. From Blessing to Violence: History and Ideology in the Circumcision Ritual of the Merina of Madagascar. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bloch, Maurice and Jonathan Parry. 1982. "Introduction: Death and the Regneration of Life." In Death and the Regeneration of Life. Edited by Maurice Bloch and Jonathan Parry. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-44.

Burton, Rulon T. 1994. We Believe: Doctrines and Principles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Salt Lake City: Tabernacle Books.

Clark, J. Reuban. 1949. On the Way to Immortality and Eternal Life. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co.

Charles, John D. 1999 (1997). Endowed From On High: Understanding the Symbols of the Endowment. Bountiful, Utah: Horizon Publishers and Distributors, Inc.

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 1995 (1979). Truth Restored. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 1992 (1976). Achieving A Celestial Marriage. Salt Lake City: Church Educational System.

Demerath III, N. J. and Phillip E. Hammond. 1969. Religion in Social Context: Tradition and Transition. New York: Random House.

Decker, Ed and Caryl Matrisiana. 1993. The God-Makers. Eugene: Harvest House Publishers.

Durkheim, Emile. 1965 (1915). The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, translated by Joseph Ward Swain. New York: The Free Press.

Gennep, Arnold van. 1960 (1908). The Rites of Passage, translated by Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffre. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hedges, Andrew H. 2000. "I Wondered If I Could Feel At Home: Southern Alberta Through the Eyes of Its Early Saints, 1883-1910." In Regional Studies in LDS Church History: Western Canada. Edited by Dennis A. Wright, Robert C. Freeman, Andrew H. Hedges, and Matthew O. Richardson. Provo: Brigham Young University, pp. 75-97.

Hertz, Robert. 1960 (1907). Death and the Right Hand, translated by Rodney and Claudia Needham. London: Cohen and West.

Humphreys, S.C. and Helen King. 2000. Mortality and Immortality: The Anthropology and Archaeology of Death. London: Academic Press.

Kehoe, Alice Beck. 1989. The Ghost Dance: Ethnohistory and Revitalisation. Fort Worth: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Kiong, Tong Chee. 1993. "The Inheritance of the Dead: Mortuary Rituals Among the Chinese in Singapore." In Social Constructions of Death in Southeast Asia. Edited by Tong Chee Kiong and Anne L. Schiller. Special issue of Southeast Asian Journal of Social Sciences 21 (2), pp. 130-158.

LaRue, William. 1919. The Foundations of Mormonism. New York: F. H. Revell.

Leach, Edmund. 1976. Culture and Communication: The logic by which symbols are connected. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Leming, Michael R. and George E. Dickinson. 1998. Understanding Dying, Death, and Bereavement (4th ed.). Fort Worth, Texas: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Levi-Strauss, Claude. 1966. The Savage Mind. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Luschin, Immo. 1992. "Latter-day Saint Temple Worship and Activity." In Encyclopaedia of Mormonism. Edited by Daniel H. Ludlow. New York: Macmillan, pp. 1447-1450.

Mauss, Armand L. 1990. "Mormons as Ethnics: Variable Historical and International Implications of an Appealing Concept." In The Mormon Presence in Canada. Edited by Brigham Y. Card, Herbert C. Northcott, John E. Foster, Howard Palmer, and George K. Jarvis. Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, pp. 332-352.

McConkie, Bruce. 1979 (1958). Mormon Doctrine. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft.

McCue, Robert J. 2000. "The Attitude Toward Plural Marriage in Canada, 1887-1992." In Regional Studies in LDS Church History: Western Canada. Edited by

Dennis A. Wright, Robert C. Freeman, Andrew H. Hedges, and Matthew O. Richardson. Provo: Brigham Young University, pp. 277-288.

McMurrin, Sterling. 1979 (1959). The Philosophical Foundations of Mormon Theology. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.

Metcalf, Peter and Richard Huntington. 1991 (1979). Celebrations of Death: The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mulder, Niels. 1996. Inside Southeast Asia. Amsterdam: The Pepin Press.

Nibley, Hugh W. 1992. "Meanings and Functions of Temples." In Encyclopaedia of Mormonism. Edited by Daniel H. Ludlow. New York: Macmillan, pp. 1458-1463.

Olsen, Steven L. 1998. "Baptized, Consecrated and Sealed: The Covenantal Foundations of Mormon Religious Identity." In Mormons, Scripture and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson. Edited by Davis Bitton. Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, pp. 3 - 26.

Ostling, Richard N. and Joan K. Ostling. 1999. Mormon America: The Power and the Promise. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco.

Palmer, Howard. 1990. "Polygamy and Progress: The Reaction to Mormons in Canada, 1887-1923." In The Mormon Presence in Canada. Edited by Brigham Y. Card, Herbert C. Northcott, John E. Foster, Howard Palmer, and George K. Jarvis. Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, pp. 108 - 135.

Perry, Keith. 1990. "Mormons as Ethnics: A Canadian Perspective." In The Mormon Presence in Canada. Edited by Brigham Y. Card, Herbert C. Northcott, John E. Foster, Howard Palmer, and George K. Jarvis. Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, pp. 353-362.

Quinn, D. Michael. 1998 (1987). Early Mormonism and the Magic World View. Salt Lake City: Signature Books.

Romney, Richard M. 1992. "Spiritual Death." In Encyclopaedia of Mormonism. Edited by Daniel H. Ludlow. New York: Macmillan, pp. 1407 - 1408.

Rosenvall, Lynn A. 2000. "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Alberta: A Historical and Geographical Perspective." In Regional Studies in LDS Church History: Western Canada. Edited by Dennis A. Wright, Robert C. Freeman, Andrew H. Hedges, and Matthew O. Richardson. Provo: Brigham Young University, pp. 1-12.

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 1995. "Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil." In The Path Ahead: Readings in Death and Dying. Edited by Lynne Ann DeSpelder. Mayfield, California: Mayfield Publishing, pp. 41-58.

Simpson, Robert L. "Administration of Temples." In Encyclopaedia of Mormonism. Edited by Daniel H. Ludlow. New York: Macmillan, pp. 1456-1458.

Stymeist, David. C1975. Ethnics and Indians: Social Relations in a Northwestern Ontario Town. Toronto: Peter Martin.

Turner, Victor Witter. 1969. The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.

Underwood, Grant. 1993. The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Velt, Harold. 1952. The Sacred Book of Ancient America. Independence, Mo.: Herald House.

Vogel, Dan. 1988. Religious Seekers and the Advent of Mormonism. Salt Lake City: Signature Books.

Widstoe, John A. 1944. An Understandable Religion. Independence, Mo.: Zion's Printing and Publishing Company.

Wilson, William A. 1990. "Mormon Folklore and History: Implications for Canadian Research." In The Mormon Presence in Canada. Edited by Brigham Y. Card, Herbert C. Northcott, John E. Foster, Howard Palmer, and George K. Jarvis. Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, pp. 150 - 166.

Wittwer, Sherri Devashrayee. 1994. Gone Too Soon: The Life and Loss of Infants and Unborn Children. American Folk, Utah: Covenant Communications, Inc.

Wood, V. A. 1989. The Alberta Temple: Centre and Symbol of Faith. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, Ltd.

Yarn, David H. and Marilyn S. Yarn. 1992. "Temple President and Matron." In Encyclopaedia of Mormonism. Edited by Daniel H. Ludlow. New York: Macmillan, pp. 1445-1146.

Appendix
Glossary

agency: The ability to chose. The LDS also commonly refer to this as free or moral agency.

antiquity: Within the context of this thesis, antiquity refers to the Middle East during the years of Judaism before the birth of Christ.

celestial kingdom: The highest kingdom of glory in LDS eschatology. It is reserved for those who led righteous lives and accepted Christ.

church meetinghouses: Buildings where church services are held every Sunday as well as the centre for many of the other social activities that take place in the ward during the week. The church meetinghouse is not to be confused with the temple.

endowment: A specialised course of instruction in which people enter into covenants with God. The endowment ceremony is only performed within the temple.

eternal progression: The belief that each person has the ability to progress, through the accumulation of knowledge and experience, throughout all of eternity. The ultimate goal of this progression is to achieve a state of deification.

exaltation: A process by which a person will eventually become deified. Exaltation is reserved for those assigned to the celestial glory in the hereafter.

Godhead: Comprised of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

intelligences: The belief that God created His spirit children out of 'intelligences,' some essential part or matter of what it means to be human. In other words, God did not create people out of nothing. The intelligences are eternal, with no beginning or end.

'married for time' versus 'married for eternity': 'Married for eternity' is an LDS expression that refers to their belief that marriages performed in the temple extend beyond this lifetime, for all of eternity. All other marriages last only 'for time,' that is, they are only valid during their mortal lives.

ordinance: An LDS term for the sacred rites and ceremonies of the church that are performed by the authority of the priesthood.

personage: A disembodied spirit.

plural marriage: The official LDS term for the former practice of polygamy within the LDS church.

priesthood holder: A faithful male who has received the priesthood. There are two priesthoods within the LDS church, the Aaronic and the Melchizedek. The Aaronic priesthood is a preparatory priesthood, and the Melchizedek priesthood is the entire priesthood with all of its duties and responsibilities.

Saints: Somebody who belongs to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

spiritual witness: A person feels the Holy Spirit (or Holy Ghost) through the experience of a burning or tingling feeling. This experience demonstrates (or witnesses) to the recipient the truth of whatever he or she had been praying or thinking about.

stake: A unit of church organisation comparable to that of a diocese. A stake consists of six to twelve wards and is presided over by a stake president who oversees the affairs of the wards.

telestial kingdom: The lowest kingdom of glory in LDS eschatology. It is reserved for those who led unrighteous lives, regardless of whether or not they accepted the gospel of Christ.

terrestrial kingdom: The middle or second kingdom of glory in LDS eschatology. It is reserved for those who lived good lives but did not accept Christ.

testimony: A sure knowledge received by revelation from the Holy Ghost of the divinity of the great Latter-day work. The foundation of which is that Joseph Smith was a prophet, the Book of Mormon is true, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only true church, and that God continues to reveal His word to a living prophet.

translation: The occasion where righteous people are instantly transformed from a mortal state into an immortal one without going through the process of death as we know it.

unpardonable sin: The Book of Mormon explains this to be "if ye deny the Holy Ghost when it once has had place in you, and ye know that ye deny it, behold, this is a sin which is unpardonable..." (Alma 36: 6).

vicarious ordinances: Another LDS term for their practice of ordinances for the deceased (including the baptisms for the dead).

ward: A unit of church organisation comparable to that of a parish. A bishop presides over the members and activities of the ward.

Word of Wisdom: A law of good health which encourages good eating habits, and prohibits harmful and addictive substances such as tea, coffee, alcohol, and drugs.

Zion: The place where the Saints dwell. In regards to the early church history, Zion was frequently referred to as the 'new Jerusalem.'